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A VISIT TO ABYSSINIA.

VOL. II.

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A VISIT TO ABYSSINIA

AN ACCOUNT OF

TRAVEL IN MODERN ETHIOPIA

BY

W. WINSTANLEY

LATE 4TH (QUEEN'S OWN) HUSSARS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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C O N T E N T S

OF

T H E S E C O N D V O L U M E .

CHAPTER I.

Presents—Rest—Mules—The Mogetsch—The Trial—Bad
News—Sympathy—Sport—Musicians . . . 1

CHAPTER II.

Unpleasant Proposition—Wiles—Chelga—Ahmed's Faith—
Serrago—Serramba again—Barambaras, the Christian
—Trouble in Dagossa 22

CHAPTER III.

My Second Captivity—Revolt of Indashaou—His Flight—
Royal Movements—First Rains—Storm—Palm Sun-
day—Festivity and Quarrels—Mahomed the Irrepres-
sible—Early Morning Service—Cogitations . . . 33

CHAPTER IV.

Ethiopia, Past and Present—Massowah—Harrar and
Zeylah 47

CHAPTER V.

Early Inhabitants—Clothing—Arms—Hair Ornamentation—Marriage Customs—Family Affection—Little Sentiment—Domestic Slavery—The Year—Soil and Agriculture—Unsettled Condition—Literature—Cattle—Villages—Tools—Bread, Beer, Wine—General Landscape—Roads 63

CHAPTER VI.

Quit Serramba—My Followers—Barambaras's Amenities—His Friend from Semyen—Wanted an Umbrella—Rain—Daiosa Alulu's Domains—My Lodgings—Barambaras is Pleasant—Farewell to him—An Old Friend—Doubts 90

CHAPTER VII.

Mule-loading—Beauty of the Landscape—Plains of Dembea—Dêk—Ras Areya—Frangar—The Betwiddet at Home—Domestic Surroundings—Cathedral of Frangar—Religious Customs 112

CHAPTER VIII.

Goramba—Market-place of Dembea—Nocturnal Companion—Abyssinian Custom—A Present—More Delay—Breakfast at Goramba—The Mogetsch—Another Stoppage—Coursing—The Cherry-tree—More Vexation—Travellers—News of the King—The Lake—Defile of Begumder 134

CHAPTER IX.

The High-road—Camp Followers—Wounded—Approach of the Ras—Emfras—Tents—Curious Birds—Bivouac—Watchfulness—The Betwiddet Bizat Bey leaves me—

His Legacy—Langué—Lake deserted—Scenery—Fog- gora—Dara—The Road—Batah—Faag—The Reb— Bridge—Facilidas—The Ras's Son—A Prisoner— Amoora Gedal	153
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

The Granite Pillar—The Ras's Encampment—My Camp— Toilette—Interview—Are you a Christian?—Presents —Rain—Night—Baijernout Ingeddah—Have you a Watch?—Leave Amoura Gedal—Road to Debra Tabor—Debra Tabor	171
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Ras Alulu—Attire—Abyssinian Ages—His House—My Tents—Guard—Daily Bread—Reception of Presents —Food—Smoking—Visit to the “King of Kings of Ethiopia”—The Palace—His Majesty—The Etchegué —Presents	191
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Home—Off to Wans Agué—The Royal Army—Vend Denghel—Garamadin of Semyen—A Practical Joke —Scenery—Trees—Birds—Mahdera Mariam—The Blasted Plain—The Gomara—Wans Agué—Hyænas —Women—Early Visit—Royal Etiquette—Neighbour- hood	209
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sulphur Spring—Wine—The Camp—Robbery—Eng- lish Interpreter—Interview with Johannes—Sporting Rifles—My Chair—Back to Debra Tabor—An Old Friend—My Suite—Martial Exercises—Interview again with Johannes—Royal Standard	228
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

Abyssinian Candles—Cold Nights—Adieu to Johannes—
 Bracelet—Leave Debra Tabor—Johannes's Last Greet-
 ings—Amoora Gedal—Bashaw Mari—Depredations—
 The Reb—Night Quarters at Faag—Domestic Troubles
 —Tzana—Cotton Industries—My Tent—The Minister's
 Court at Frangar 247

CHAPTER XV.

The Ras's House—Old Friends—Position—Ras's Speech—
 The Royal Animals partake of the Ras's Hospitality—
 Presents—Visit from Bizat Bey—Other Visitors—The
 Ras's Son—Domestic Troubles again—Final Interview
 with Ras Areya—Presents—His Ailments—Quit Fran-
 gar—Daiossa Alulu's Domain—The Escort . . . 267

CHAPTER XVI.

Present to Ahmed—Chelga Market—Hailstorm—Robbery
 —Daiossa's Woes—Route to Wahnaat—The Ras's
 Emissary—An Unpleasant Incident—Proceed alone—
 Arrival at Wahnaat 290

A VISIT TO ABYSSINIA.

CHAPTER I.

Presents—Rest—Mules—The Mogetsch—The Trial—Bad
News—Sympathy—Sport—Musicians.

FROM this point we commenced a descent into the plains. At one p.m. we halted, and the promised benefactions commenced making their appearance. A huge ox was first led forward and was followed by masses of the country bread borne in flat round wicker-baskets carried on the head, beer in large earthenware jars, butter and paprika in smaller ones, and a special vessel containing honey and several bowls of milk ; then there was a small supply of bread of superior quality for my private consumption, made into a loaf shaped like a large bun about one foot in diameter and two inches thick, which was excellent.

The paprika, of which the natives are very fond and with which they flavour everything, is composed of powdered capsicums or chilis, and resembles red oil paint, being in a thickened fluid and tremendously hot. How the throats and stomachs of the natives stand the quantities of this favourite stimulus which they swallow is wonderful, and can only arise from lifelong practice.

There was a difficulty about the manner in which the ox was to be slaughtered; if killed by the Christian, it could not be partaken of by the followers of the Prophet; if, on the other hand, death was inflicted by the hand of a Moslem, the prejudices of the Habesh were outraged and angry feelings at seeing me, a Christian, indifferent to these prejudices were aroused. However as the meat was brought for my use, and it was a problem beyond solution to satisfy the views of both religions, I decided on handing over the work of destruction to my domestics; for, as it was Lent, the natives were properly restricted from indulging in flesh diet, and whatever remained unconsumed by my party must be at this season necessarily useless.

Personally I cared but little, for I found

Abyssinian beef so tough and musky that I had long given up all attempts at its consumption. The native ox, though small and shapely, carries a suspicious hump and has a buffalo-like appearance.

On the previous day I had gladly acquiesced in the proposal to make an easy march. I was, however, somewhat surprised when the Betwiddet informed me that it was not his intention to move from our halting-place until the morrow; and I then remonstrated, showing that in this manner and at this rate of progress I should not reach Johannes in six months. He, however, in most persuasive tones, pointed out to me in what a shocking condition my mules were, and that possibly a little rest and attention at this period would be amply repaid by their subsequent improvement; and to enforce his argument great attention was afforded those animals suffering from sores, and plasters of mixed grass, butter, and cowdung were placed on their wounds. They certainly were in a sad plight at this early stage after such light marching, twelve out of the twenty-nine being sick; and, on thinking the matter quietly over, I came to the conclusion that on arrival at Debra Tabor, the first large

town on our route, the greater portion of the mules and baggage would have to be abandoned and the remainder of the journey made in an extremely light marching order. The native appliances for fastening effects on the mule are not in any way adapted for boxes, portmanteaus, &c., and are only calculated for bales or balanced bags. I had to carry not only my personal property, but also cases containing presents for the king, Ras Areya, &c. These had been reconstructed under the eye of the envoy at Gallabat, and he had expressed his approval of those made, but they turned out in practice to be far too large, and every mule burdened in turn with these packages developed a sore back.

There was no doubt, moreover, that for rapid travelling my mules were too many in number, and this must have been well known to Barambaras on my quitting Serramba, but he had offered neither counsel nor warning on the subject, seeming too well pleased that I should start with every disadvantage.

The loading and unloading of my caravan required an hour, and frequently an hour and a half. Each time of starting the burdens were

strapped on with long, thin strips of leather, which passed around and ran underneath the mule's belly; in order, therefore, when a single case was in question to secure it across the back effectually, it became necessary to draw the fastenings so tightly that the mule was nearly cut in two or the package very shortly slipped round, two small square boxes of ball ammunition giving endless trouble, and falling off about six times daily.

I suffered much annoyance, I must confess, from the constant surveillance I was subjected to; it was an impossibility for me to obtain even a moment's privacy. If I selected a sequestered spot for a temporary resting-place, in a very short time I was certain to discover that immediately opposite would be posted, quite unostentatiously, a small knot of observant natives. If I snatched up a gun and went out hastily unattended for a stray shot, after a hundred yards there surely would be an individual or two carelessly strolling on the same course, and, in whichever direction I bent my steps, I was always conscious of heads popping up above the long grass or reeds in my neighbourhood. If I took up a pencil to write even a few lines, at once

a dozen keen and jealous glances followed every motion of my hand. I had known years ago, when Europeans were strangers in Japan, what it was to be followed by an admiring crowd of possibly a thousand people, to have holes bored in my bed-room wall by ladies curious as to the habits of the foreigner, and to hold a perfect levée of all ages and either sex during my morning bath ; but that was curiosity, unlimited no doubt, but good-humoured and unmixed with any other feeling. In Abyssinia it partook too much of the nature of a disagreeable supervision to be at all welcome. At Serramba on two occasions, when I had endeavoured to make a sketch of the surrounding scenery, I had been absolutely interfered with and “ moved on.”

February 15th.—Shortly after starting on the following day, we crossed the Mogetsch at a ford where it was about thirty yards wide, and, even at this period of the year, boasted a considerable stream. Its waters were clear and extremely pleasant to the taste. Gondar is situated near a branch of this river, which rises in the mountainous district of Woggera, and pours its current at a slight distance from where I passed into the north-east portion of Lake Tzana.

At one p.m., after following a very easy road along the plains, we entered on a track thickly dotted about with small trees and shrubs, and then, in about half an hour, emerging from this, found ourselves faced by a thriving village, and here the Governor proposed to halt. He was, however, over-ruled by some of his followers, who pointed out the superior attractions of a wide-spreading, lofty tree at a short distance off, and, cantering on to this spot, our day's march was again stated to be finished.

On the road Bizat Bey had been very gay and conversational, had insisted on my riding his son's mule, which I had admired, for it was a strong and handsome beast, and a great contrast to the somewhat feeble creature which I owned, had taught me the names of two Abyssinian plants I had inquired for—the khumqual and the shum-bacqua—with neither of which I was previously acquainted, and had talked at length on the route I should have to pursue after leaving him, giving me much apparently well-intentioned counsel. We were all in good temper, and when, shortly after, a messenger, who met us on the route, fell back with my host and held a lengthened conversation

with him, I naturally attributed it to business affairs connected with the administration of the province, and nothing occurred during that afternoon to mar our quiet festivity.

The village in our proximity supplied with generous haste our various wants. The tree afforded a very excellent shade, and a plain which lay in our front was traversed at a short distance by a small stream, from which we obtained a plentiful quantity of water. The men clustered in small knots around the Betwiddet, his son, and myself, who occupied the interior space with the interpreter and a few favourite officers, and amusement was shortly afforded by a trial, the result of a dispute and wager between two followers.

A large semi-circle was formed by the attendants, who composed the audience. In the centre, supported on either hand by the superior members of his suite, sat the Betwiddet, prepared to act as judge, all, of course, squatted on the ground. At a trifling distance, in front of the judge, stood the two disputants, the ends of whose garments were knotted together and held in the hand of a third person who separated them, and whose duty it was to prevent

their coming to blows, if excited by the heat of argument or by their feelings of animosity.

The shorter of the two, a man with a very strongly-marked Jewish cast of countenance, whose head, adorned with the unusual appendage of a beard, was too large to be in proportion to his body, but who was broad-shouldered and truculent-looking, commenced the case with much vehemence and plausibility, and it was soon evident that his sarcasms and insulting remarks told strongly on his opponent, a tall, thin individual with a shy, nervous manner, for the latter at times writhed with passion and obviously burned to attack his wordy adversary, who at once, seeing his advantage, redoubled his violence and stinging observations.

Waving his hand in the direction of the defendant with a contemptuous gesture, so closely as to narrowly escape his nose, with a derisive laugh, he gave vent to mocking sentences. Then, turning deferentially to the Betwiddet, an oily smile clothed his features, and he made remarks of a complimentary nature to that dignitary's good sense and love of

justice. I saw that the tribute of praise was not unsuccessful, and a bland expression played gently about the old gentleman's mouth. With a spring, he then threw himself back again, facing his foe, his legs and arms extended, and jibes rang out in clear, voluble utterance for about half an hour. I could see that it was very bad to bear, but, during the attack, silence was enforced under penalty of a fine, and the wretched being upon whom all these vituperations were poured, ran down with visible perspiration from the restraint forced upon his feelings. When he was at length allowed to answer, he proved very inferior in eloquence to his assailant, and was clearly too angry and excited to make good his cause. After his reply, others were called upon to corroborate either view of the question, and the case was then left to the Betwiddet's decision. In addition to the stake legitimately at issue, farther zest was given to the result by bets made by the claimants on the result, amounting to ten dollars each, a heavy sum in Abyssinia. The short man was adjudged the victor, and his discomfited adversary bore a sad countenance for many days after.

In the evening I strolled out, having seen many guinea fowls, but I on no occasion met with quail in Abyssinia, or, indeed, in any lower latitude than 18°. I was shortly joined by the envoy. We shot several birds between us, in addition to two small antelopes, after which I returned to our camping-tree, where, in the meantime, I found a small hut of branches had been constructed for the Governor, an unusual attention for one night.

. *February 16th.*—The men seemed unnecessarily slow in loading the mules, and, as it was growing late, I became impatient, but could not discover the Betwiddet. I was then told that one of the mules had strayed away and could not be found, then later on that the Governor did not intend to move. The general manner was unpleasant and defiant, and I felt that something was about to happen that I should not like.

After numerous attempts to obtain conversation with Bizat Bey, he at length appeared, accompanied by an individual whom he introduced to me as a special courier from the king, bearing a message from Johannes to the effect that, as he had entirely succeeded in his campaign in Kur-

Agné, it was his intention to return immediately. It therefore became undesirable that I should proceed any farther, but he preferred rather that I should return to Serramba to await his arrival in that province.

Bitter was my disgust at this information, and I felt sick with disappointment. After the restoration of an active existence, and the hopes entertained of an interesting journey through a country of which comparatively nothing was known, to return once more to the weary monotony of life at Serramba, was indeed a melancholy prospect. I rebelled—I refused to go back, and most positively declined Serramba. I pictured to myself my welcome “home,” with grim sarcasm, by Barambaras, the renewal of companionship with my fettered brother-captives, and farther vicarious acquaintance with the fiend through my fair neighbour. All this offered indeed a dismal contrast to my late aspirations, and I viciously announced my intention of remaining where I was.

The Betwiddet was overwhelmed with grief, and gazed at me with affectionate sympathy; I think tears stood in his eyes, and I am sure I felt them in his voice, which was

tremulous with emotion as he condoled with me on my distress. "But still," he said, slowly and impressively, "I think you will find yourself obliged to return. In the course of duty I shall be compelled to retire with my followers, and you will be then reduced to remain here unprotected from robbers and wild beasts; the people around will not dare to supply you with food without permission; there will be nobody to load the mules, which will stray and be stolen, you have no guides to show you the route, and if you had, the army returning would plunder you before you reached the king; therefore, I counsel return, it will not be for very long."

I saw my fate was sealed, and, when I passed in review several suspicious circumstances, combined with the absence during the last few days of any desire to press forward, the sad conviction began to force itself into my mind that the entire journey had been a ruse to amuse me, and that the sly old fox had a perfect understanding with Barambaras, and had all along known that I was merely out for an airing.

Gradual humiliating submission was inevitable. I made a stand, however, for a change of quarters from Serramba to Chelga; this was

guaranteed, and the eventful day terminated by the mules' heads being turned once more in the direction of Barambaras' territory.

At twelve o'clock I mounted my animal, and, sad and dispirited, pursued the northerly course we were now taking. In about two hours' time the old gentleman pulled up and slyly pointing out a winding stream, in which several small flocks of wild fowl were disporting themselves, asked me if I should object to remain here during the remainder of the day. Of course I acquiesced, and after an excellent afternoon's sport I recovered a little my equanimity and politeness so far as to offer a couple of fine ducks to my host, who, however, declined them on account of religious scruples, not feeling quite sure that Moses approved of wild duck. Observers of the Mosaical restrictions on food, and having only traditional authority and but small immediate means of reference, Abyssinians are a little uncertain as to what they may and may not eat.

Bizat Bey was obviously in no hurry, neither most certainly was I, and nothing would have suited me better than to have led a vagrant life sporting about the plains of Dembea, until the

arrival of Johannes. So on the next day, having recrossed the Mogetsch at a spot higher up, we remained a mile and a half distant from the market-place of Dembea encamped for that and the succeeding day, sport being abundant.

Two trees, separated by an interval of twenty yards, were chosen as affording a welcome shelter from the noonday sun, for, although the nights were cold, the heat which commenced about ten a.m. became in the middle of the day very great. I and my household took possession of one tree; the other was utilized by the Betwiddet and a few favourite followers, the remainder of the soldiery who accompanied him grouping themselves around in knots of six or seven. The ground in front of us sloped down gradually to a stream, which was, however, invisible at this spot, high banks enclosing its water. A neat village, surrounded, as is the custom in these districts, by a high reed fence, stood about three hundred yards distant, and to our right and front a long level extended, reaching to the lake, which was hidden by undulations of the country from the point we occupied. Ranges of hills ran at half a mile's distance on our left hand, and towards these the

stream inclined in a winding, erratic course. Villagers were busy washing their linen at a ford which was directly opposite, and carrying home the water necessary for domestic purposes, and the household cats thought us sufficiently near to be visited.

My host was a wonderful man to travel with, not understanding a word of any language but his own, there was always cheerfulness in his companionship, and his smiles and shrugs were masterpieces of international conversation. Ready at all times to talk and drink, it was impossible to feel dull with him. From native beer to absinthe unworthy prejudice was discarded. I found him equally expert with all beverages, and a thirst so prodigious I have never seen developed.

Wild duck were very numerous and absurdly tame, and I found it requisite to throw up my arms in order to make them rise, a course of conduct indignantly repudiated by the native accompanying me, whose views of a stealthy family shot were thereby upset.

I followed the course of the river towards the mountains, and, entering a narrow gorge through which it ran, found its many bends and curves

extremely pretty, but nothing larger than gazelle crossed my path in the shape of sport. For a considerable distance an admiring crowd from the village accompanied me, whom I found terribly in the way, but they were always good-humoured and respectful.

In the evening, when preparing for dinner about six o'clock, I discovered that the corks of the wine-bottles had fallen out as usual during the route, a misfortune which occurred so constantly as to suggest uneasy suspicions of human agency in their removal; and, as the case in which they were contained was perfectly dry, I became confirmed in a previous idea that, on the many occasions when I had missed the mule bearing the fluids on the march, he had been drawn aside and the contents quietly appropriated by the native drivers.

Consoling myself with water from the adjacent stream, I had disposed of a very excellent wild duck, and was busily employed with a cigarette when I saw three persons, two males and one female, approaching my tree, who, prophetic instinct warned me at once, were itinerant minstrels, and, not wishing to undergo the torture, I waved them off. They were not,

however, to be denied, and, sitting down, launched out into an endless effusion of an apparently extempore description. It was divided into three cantos: the first in honour of the Betwiddet, the second in praise of the Governor-General of the Soudan, the third devoted to myself. It is needless to say that absence of knowledge of the individual eulogized is no bar to fluency of song, and every heroic achievement was now attributed in turn to the selected object. Daring in war and sage in council, he was eventually led through a series of amatory successes most flattering to his vanity and endurance, and more particular in detail than delicate in imagery.

When the minstrelsy was ended, the dance began, and the lady, who must have seen full fifty summers, and was dreadfully thin, commenced a saltatory performance of a nature springy, and certainly not prudish—a corroboration of the fact that modesty is of no special age or nation. I bestowed fitting recompense, and, taking a small revenge on the Christians who had been so fanatically anxious with reference to my soul's welfare from my non-observance of Lenten fasts, I informed them that such indeli-

cate exhibitions, at all times distasteful to me, were still more so when enacted during a season of religious solemnity by a lady of so few charms and an age so advanced. My objections, however, did not extend to Ahmed and my domestics, who enjoyed a most festive time, and remained enchanted listeners to melody until an early hour in the morning.

Throughout the plains of Dembea small antelope, wild duck, guinea-fowl, and hares were abundant; but I searched in vain for larger game, and the prevalence of villages in this district is, I suspect, unfavourable to the shyer and more wary animals.

On the following afternoon I saw at some distance a tall bird, which I at first supposed to be an ostrich; the district I was traversing was, however, out of their ordinary track, and the plumage seemed to me unusually brilliant. I could not, unfortunately, approach it sufficiently near to determine its identity. It uttered a drawn-out, plaintive cry, resembling that of a child, and was named the "Amoora."

At Shimbazar, a village we passed through, a special bread peculiar to that place, and formed in a crumpet-like shape, is made, which I found

delicious ; it is noted amongst Abyssinians, and much esteemed.

When the day broke, I mournfully commenced preparations for the march, for it was my last day with Bizat Bey, and on the next I should have to pass over once more into the hands of the border chief, whose followers I found as ungenial as their master. However, we started gaily, and ascending a small hill range to our right, the Betwiddet informed me it was his intention to exhibit to my inspection the crack mule of that side of Dembea.

When we reached the village in which the proud animal resided, a temporary halt was made, and, of course, refreshment produced. The worthy gentleman's habits had become well known to me, and I verily believe that mention of the mule had been made as an excuse for a short stage and a halt. However, he was produced, and proved to be of an unusual colour, dark grey, went, as I thought, slightly lame, but was possessed of size and undoubted speed ; the price asked was one hundred dollars. I had no desire to become the purchaser, but I saw that my dragoman had, and he was allowed a trial ride, consulting me subsequently as to the beast's

merits. My mind was quite made up that the creature was lame, although it was less perceptible in action, and Ahmed eventually came to the same conclusion. I am sorry to say that I fear a horse-dealing transaction of a sharp sort had been prepared for soft foreigners, and my friend the Betwiddet never allowed me to forget that "he was poor, very poor."

We then descended once more into the market-plain, and, after crossing this, took a sharp curve to the right through a narrow mountain pass, emerging from which, we entered some wooded tracts, with a pretty winding stream, near which we made dispositions for the evening.

CHAPTER II.

Unpleasant Proposition—Wiles—Chelga—Ahmed's Faith—
 Ferrago—Serramba again—Barambaras, the Christian
 —Trouble in Dagossa.

WHEN I arrived at the boundaries of Dem-bea I once more passed into the charge of Barambaras. I was, unfortunately, deprived of the chance of saying farewell to the Betwid-det, as he went away at daybreak, pleading ill-health; but, I strongly suspect, in order to avoid giving any guarantee as to my future. Neither Barambaras nor his vakeel appeared, in fact, no responsible agent, and the escort consisted of not more than thirty men, proving how little real had been the fear for my safety previously urged on me. Of course, on asking the man in charge what destination was proposed for me, he answered Ser-

ramba. And on my informing him that I should not accompany him thither, he prayed me not to get him into trouble by refusing to do so, stating that he had no authority to act in any other manner.

This conduct, after the promise made me, rendered me once more indignant, and, seeing that I intended resistance, at a corner of the road Barambaras's deputy suddenly made his appearance. Daiossa Alulu, the chief of the market at Chelga, was one of the most prepossessing of Barambaras's followers, and, although as crafty and deceitful as all of his race, I greeted his appearance with pleasure, and acquainted him with my resolve.

Owing to disturbances—of which he gave me an account—in the adjacent provinces of Dagossa and Kwara, neither Barambaras nor his head officer, who were busy preparing to set out in that direction to quell them, were able to meet me, and the chief trusted that, in consideration of these circumstances and the danger of my remaining alone at Chelga, I should see the advisability of inhabiting Ser-ramba, adding as a temptation that my old quarters had been already prepared for me.

Daiossa Alulu realized right well that by this time the ordinary route to Chelga was thoroughly known to me, so now, like a cunning Ethiopian, he devised a crafty change of road by which, crossing the hills suddenly, we should alter our direction, and, passing behind Chelga, avoid the town and market-place altogether, trusting to the absence of recognized landmarks to throw me off the scent, and thus arrive at Serramba before I was prepared to find myself there, when I should be more easily persuaded to yield, and, possibly, disinclined to turn back or journey further. The better also to effect this purpose he secured the co-operation of the Abyssinian linguist (always a traitor to me), and the wily ones prepared for victory.

But I became almost immediately fully aware of the scheme, and a pocket-compass revealed the whole iniquity; when, therefore, the leading man commenced a turn which I knew led away from Chelga I at once sent him back, and, to the delight of my domestics and the chagrin of Daiossa, led the way myself to the town.

In a sheltered nook at the foot of some

hills, with a stream bubbling about fifty yards from my camp-fire, I halted the escort that night myself. With but thirty Abyssinians, and no recognized head, I knew very well that I was the master of the situation, and intended to do as I pleased. I made my own servants unload and tether the mules, regardless of the protests of Daiossa Alulu and the naked warriors of Serramba, who, offering no sort of assistance, danced around with threats, jeers, and remonstrances; whilst as a farther reproach Daiossa sat down on a big stone and wept aloud.

Seeing, however, that I remained unmoved, no actual opposition was thrown in my way, and when at length I was obviously about to compose myself for the night, the market-chief once more tried the effect of intimidation. He reported that a roving band of the revolutionists of Dagossa had penetrated this province, and but the day before menaced Chelga; should they become acquainted with my stay in the neighbourhood, they would undoubtedly fall upon my party during the night and carry me off, either with a view to producing political complications or of demanding a heavy ran-

som for my release. Accordingly, to give additional force to his arguments, the men commenced ostentatiously examining and priming their weapons, and I was requested, if I intended to remain obstinately and in defiance of reason where I was, also to make ready my own arms and pass a watchful night.

This was, however, such a childish ruse to alarm me that I continued indifferent to it, and contented myself by pointing out that the inhabitants of the adjacent village were obviously in a condition of ease of mind and absence of alarm certainly not characteristic of such imminent peril; and, when he rejoined that they had all retired into their houses and barricaded the entrances, I replied that I did not believe it.

After this, in a rage, he mounted his horse and galloped off in the dark, taking the direction of Serramba. My servants behaved well throughout, and indeed seemed from the first to have penetrated the swaggering, terrorising nature of the Abyssinian; they met jeer with jeer, and proceeded calmly about their ordinary avocations.

Ahmed's tranquillity of mind was undoubtedly disturbed, and he conveyed to me the important intelligence that his weapons were at full cock, and that, should a struggle arise, he should fight to the death. But his tone was sullen and his countenance pasty, and he hastened to add that he for one had always thought Serramba a most happy spot. I saw that the imaginary risks of the wily Daiossa had had their due effect, and that at least one convert to the advisability of revisiting the mount had been gained.

Much amusement had been afforded me lately by witnessing the dawning of Christian truth upon the convictions of the undecided Mussulman. It was a conversion the more startling as it was effected without argument or theological controversy, and resulted entirely, as it would seem, from too great an exposure to an atmosphere and armed populace fanatically Christian. There was no doubt this assumption had obtained him a certain amount of amiability from the Habesh on the route, whilst the keenest, though disguised contempt awaited him from my domestics, staunch Mahomedans. His happiest moments on the

trip to Dembea were passed, when, surrounded by about twenty of the escort, he sat cross-legged in their midst, cigarette in hand, and, with a countenance composed to condescending affability, in sonorous tones relieved their ignorance in a complicated language compounded of Arabic and a few words of Abyssinian.

The attention he received was indeed greatly owing to their want of comprehension of his powerfully-delivered sentences; but it flattered his vanity, and, having on many occasions explained to them that but two steps existed between the grades of Effendi and Pacha, he shortly received brevet rank, and was usually addressed as Ahmed Pacha.

When the morning broke, the night having passed without the least disturbance, Daiossa Alulu returned, accompanied by another messenger from Barambaras, giving me authority to select any village I might desire for my residence, and indicating Serrago, about equidistant from Chelga and Serramba, as a suitable district. I acquiesced, and we all shortly moved off with the view of inspecting Serrago.

It was about an hour and a half later when

the village proposed was reached. As we halted, it faced our position, and I could see it consisted of a dozen miserable houses, situated on the side of a hill overlooking a narrow valley and the chain of down on which we were marching. A small stream ran across our path, trickling into the valley below, through which it wound in an attenuated course, and there were a few trees in the vicinity of the village; but its general aspect was not inviting, and it had no doubt been selected on that account. However, I determined to try a closer inspection, and with that object was once more getting under weigh, when Daiossa in respectful accents requested me to receive a preparatory communication from his master to this effect: "I was now about to dwell at Serrago at my own risk, therefore it would be necessary that the presents for the king should be taken charge of in a place of safety, viz., Serramba. This I could not possibly object to; the purveyance of food from the market, the carrying of wood and water for my household, must be arranged by myself; the present tenants of the houses would be then turned out, and I could enter on possession."

It was abundantly clear to me that life under

such conditions would be made unnecessarily burdensome to all ; moreover, the Mahomedan men in my service would soon become discontented at being called upon to do work which native males considered beneath the dignity of a man ; and as it was obvious the silent vote of all was passed for Serramba, I ceased resistance, and set the example of submission by leading the way without another word. But when I descended the foot-track leading to the fortress, and resumed the opposite ascent, not even the clumsy antics of Ahmed slipping about, and engaged in frantic efforts to regulate the movements of two unruly feet, could relieve my disgust and sadness. Happily, no parade and no pipers awaited us, and we, as it were, sneaked back into our old quarters without a welcome.

Barambaras was waiting to receive me, and passing through the village, which, to my surprise, I found deserted, I walked towards his house, observing on the road a strange air of silence and desolation. He greeted me with much apparent cordiality, informed me that he had heard all that I had said about Serramba and himself, that he forgave me, was sorry that I had been turned back, and yet more sorry

that I had not possessed sufficient Christian charity to separate Barambaras, in his character of enforced gaoler, from Barambaras a well-wishing fellow-believer. He then launched out into a half-hour's harangue on his own sacrifice of inclination to duty, telling me in how poor a house he dwelt at Serramba, remaining there principally for my safety, and how essential it was that servants of Government should have no personal wishes or desires. I replied that my wish was to get forward, that, if forced to remain, the restrictions on my freedom were absurd. On this he informed me that in future I was at liberty to go where I pleased in moderation.

A considerable time was then occupied in a sketch which he gave me of the events happening around, which, he said, compelled his absence, possibly for a lengthened period. The Governor of Dagossa (the next province), by name Indashaou, had found it impossible to raise the tribute due from his department, and, discontented at the prospect of probable supersession, had sided with the people, who were rebelling at the weight of the taxation imposed on them, and they were now jointly in open revolt.

He, Barambaras, would be almost immediately on the march to meet them with various troops collected from this and the adjacent provinces of Dembea, aided also by a contribution of warriors from Gondar. With the force at his disposal, he had no doubt that a termination would be put to the insurrection, and peace again enforced.

I asked if it was his intention to remove his household from Serramba. Never very communicative on similar matters, he stated that all had been arranged, and that no interference would take place in the supply of bread, &c., to my servants.

Wishing the warrior good evening, I departed with the purpose of re-arranging my mansion, which I found exactly as I had left it, even to old fragments of *Truth* and the *World* lying about, and I really began to fancy that possibly months of my life might have to be passed in Serramba.

CHAPTER III.

My Second Captivity—Revolt of Indashaou—His Flight—
 Royal Movements—First Rains—Storm—Palm Sunday—
 Festivity and Quarrels—Mahomed the Irrepressible—
 Early Morning Service—Cogitations.

AN account of my second detention would be tedious and uninteresting. There arose but few incidents to mark the passage of uneventful days; the beauty of the scenery had lost much of its charm, and a short afternoon walk on my usual exercising-ground was nearly my only recreation. I had of course found the promises of future liberty to be moonshine, and although I myself discovered a way off the hill, unguarded by sentries on account of its apparent impassability, it was so steep to descend, and so fatiguing to re-ascend, that I did not often make use of it.

I was now the monarch of Serramba in the absence of its hereditary chief, and when, shortly afterwards, a report reached the small garrison that we were to be attacked by one of the Governor's many foes, it was somewhat amusing that I was looked up to, in case of such an event, to organise means of resisting it, and defend his wife and domestic belongings, thus becoming the protector of my own prison.

I set myself steadily to work to acquire Arabic. I held constant conversations with members of the garrison, gathering all the knowledge I could obtain respecting their habits and methods of thought, and daily wrote portions of this memoir. My interpreter and servants became naturally much demoralised by the life, for they possessed no resources, and at this time I found that the good faith of all towards me had been successfully undermined by negotiations with my guardians. Any knowledge which could be obtained from me was at once communicated to Barambaras by the linguists, and my stores and candles were parted with to the same gentleman by my domestics for benefits and concessions received

by them in exchange. My dragoman, on the strength of friendship with my host, became at times openly impertinent and insubordinate. This conduct had, however, the effect of putting me fully upon my guard, and I determined to trust no one.

News of the "Key of the Frontier's" proceedings reached me from time to time. The force at his disposal amounted to four thousand men; this included those from Chelga, Dembea, and Gondar. Now considerable levies had been previously drawn from all these sources to accompany the King Johannes in his expedition to the Southern Gallas, and I heard that those that remained to be taken included many old and infirm men. There was no doubt much discontent existing in the country, and the spectacle of a governor aiding and abetting his subjects to insurrection was no extraordinary one. Indashaou, however, did not, it appeared, await our chief's arrival, but, with a band of a chosen few, fled before him. On this Barambaras made his head-quarters at Bamba, the principal town of Dagossa, and sent out scouts to ascertain the direction of the fugitive's movements. This was at first a north-westerly one, through the adja-

cent province of Kwara, towards the Soudan frontier, and "the Key" set off in pursuit with three thousand men, the ex-Governor of Dagossa being accompanied by about three hundred. However, a rapidly-executed counter-march to the rear forced Barambaras to perform a movement of a similar nature, and at last Indashaou, hunted fairly down, took refuge in a small island in the celebrated lake, and here he bid defiance to his pursuers.

On his return from this expedition, Barambaras gave a great banquet to the warriors of Chelga on a plain a short distance from this height. I witnessed it from the eastern end; it varied from the previous entertainment I have described only in the number of oxen slain and the quantity of wine consumed. The deeds of valour performed were duly celebrated by itinerant minstrels, and verses, in which Barambaras figured as a mighty hero, were sung, and his praises abundantly sounded.

Frequent rumours reached me regarding the movements of Johannes, but I had learned to mistrust everything told me. At one time the king had left Kur-agué, would be shortly at Debra Tabor, and had already announced his

intention of seeing me there ; at another Ras Areyä had been sent forward by him with full powers to deal with and dispose of my mission. As this latter report was known to be specially distasteful to me, it was frequently revived. At length it was placed beyond doubt that a great number of oxen and a large quantity of wine had been ordered for a grand feast to be held at Debra Tabor in honour of the arrival of the vanguard of the returning army, and the king was expected in that town on the 13th. I instantly wrote a letter, in which I requested leave to come forward to Debra Tabor at once, and sent it through my guardian, with a polite message to him at his encampment on the plain. I may as well mention that, when I subsequently inquired of him whether he had forwarded the missive, he returned the answer that he had not thought it necessary to do so ; but as I was at the same time informed that in about eight days I was to leave for Debra Tabor, I was mollified, and made no farther remark.

The fates had, however, ordained that I was not to leave my mountain dwelling without a touch of final misery, and on the 11th of March the fleecy clouds, which had for some days past

appeared in a hitherto brilliant sky, on this morning commenced clustering together, and gathered in extent and density, rapidly increasing in volume during the afternoon, until they thickened into heavy black masses. At an early hour they obscured the ordinary light. This was the presage of the early rains, the first few pattering drops of which shortly began to fall. As evening drew on, grand crashes of thunder rolled up the chasm at my feet, followed by fitful gusts of wind, which rapidly accumulating strength and steadiness, and eagerly escaping from a narrow channel encountered in their passage, burst into force and fury in the broader hollows beneath, and whirled along dense clouds of dust, insects, and leaves with a wild rush across our mountain, sweeping it with mighty power.

The village lay happily in a slight hollow, but my doorway faced the valley, consequently volumes of dust filled my room, whilst the only means by which I could keep the blankets on my bed consisted in lying on them. My house swayed to and fro, and at last the wind, getting under the eaves, began to move the heavy roof, whilst the main supports cracked audibly. As I

did not wish to be buried at Serramba I quitted its shelter, and continued constantly walking about under the lee of my dwelling, trusting to the termination of the gale to repair damages, for the thatch was flying in all directions.

Ahmed's dwelling and my kitchen went early in the night, and the village was a heavy sufferer. At six a.m. the violence of the storm abated, and my abode was spared the destruction which I had certainly at one time considered inevitable. A repetition of this rough and boisterous weather occurred the following evening and night, and strong winds prevailed for the whole of the ensuing month.

On the evening of the thirteenth a troupe of small boys, with a few of larger growth, paraded the village, bearing in their hands long straight wands, about seven feet in length. With these they surrounded the various houses, paying especial attention to those most likely to respond favourably, beating the ground around them, as well as their exterior, until quieted by a bestowal of alms. I of course presented a fair mark, and found that, in a manner not entirely unparalleled in this country, one lot of youthful applicants retired when a *douceur* had been presented,

only to allow another lot to appear after a decent interval had elapsed.

This custom was a celebration of the termination of Lent, and on the fourteenth, Palm Sunday, a grand procession of the priests and their fraternity in full canonicals ushered in the day. They were gorgeous after the fashion of the Greek Church, and were attired in all the finery collected from the religious buildings in the neighbourhood. The procession at a slight distance had a picturesque appearance, being gay with many-coloured garments and much gold embroidery; but, on a near inspection, I found the mauve and scarlet to be very faded, and the lace sadly tarnished, as they had doubtless served many years.

A priest of venerable exterior, surmounted by a towering white turban, headed the ceremonial march, carrying a very complicated and imposing gilt brass crozier; he was followed by boys with hand-bells, whilst others were in possession of instruments constructed of brass, with wires on which were strung coins of the same metal; these they rattled to and fro with a jingling, unmusical effect. Others there were who accompanied the procession armed with bundles of long reeds and

palm-leaves, which they cast about in the road, and distributed to the bystanders, expecting, however, to be rewarded for these symbols of the sacred ceremony. The whole was a celebration of Palm Sunday, the day following which is given up to revelry, and on the morrow, the fifteenth, the great occasion arrived. I offered a congratulatory visit to Barambaras, who, however, declined it, remarking that as we had business to transact on the following day that would suffice. The "Key of the Frontier" rarely erred from excess of politeness, and had never once condescended to visit me in my own dwelling.

The day, however, brought its own sources of excitement, independently of my host, and the indiscriminate flow of wine produced much preliminary hilarity, followed by subsequent quarrelsomeness amongst the Abyssinian soldiery quartered on the hill. They collected in brawling, jabbering knots around my house, many of them, in drunken facetiousness, forcing themselves within the doorway, and becoming insulting when ejected. It happened, unfortunately, that my servants, also tinged with festivity, had arrived at a condition when

warlike feeling assumes the ascendancy, and religious and national differences fire the blood. Aiding in the expulsion of the intruders on their master's domicile, it was with difficulty that I restrained them from violent retaliation, and Mahomed, with injudicious severity, punished several with a whip.

In five minutes more there was a row, and I rushed out to find Mahomed in the grasp of a colossal native, who had already drawn his sword, and threatened to shorten his stature by a head. After some trouble, arising principally from the extremely combative disposition of my domestic, I succeeded in quieting affairs; but my greatest assistance arose from the sudden fall of a tremendous hail-storm, so violent as to compel all to seek shelter, for missiles the size of marbles struck those who were exposed with such force as to cut the skin. Therefore, giving an asylum to some of the more respectable and least drunken revellers, I used them in keeping at a distance their worst-behaved and more troublesome *confrères*.

In the night Mahomed's condition had become one of raving delirium, and the village—

long ere this wrapped in heavy slumber, the result of potations sustained throughout the day—was aroused by his shrieks and yells, which lasted for three hours, and formed a complete commination service, including, in loudly-uttered abuse with strict impartiality, all his superiors or foes; and on this occasion, from hidden stores of knowledge, he produced the strongest and least admired adjectives in many languages. Happily, at length nature placed a limit on this development of varied acquirements, and he relapsed into insensibility; but from this period an aberration of intellect was clearly visible to all, which had doubtless its origin in fever, induced by great sudden change of temperature.

Hardly had the last tones of Mahomed's powerful observations died away on the left of my house, when from the opposite side, in a husky, four-o'clock-in-the-morning sort of voice, two holy men commenced an early matutinal service, aided by three or four drowsy boys intoning responses. A farther entertainment of two hours was thus afforded me, and I was really, I believe, the only auditor of this re-

ligious observance, the natives, for whose salvation it was performed, being to a man buried in drugged repose.

After many attempts at evasion, I succeeded in forcing a visit on Barambaras, who informed me that my departure on the morrow depended on the advent of a courier from the Betwiddet Bizat Bey, who might arrive either this afternoon or the next morning. The gentleman was himself recovering from a debauch, and was quite unfit for conversation, looked dirty, soddened, and headachy; and, as the preparations for my departure were necessarily dependent upon his recovering animation sufficient to give orders on the subject, I felt far from sanguine respecting my future. Of course, any delay in my arrival arising from his conduct would be attributed in some manner to shortcomings on my side; and should I reach Debra Tabor too late to interview Johannes, owing to fresh inactivity decided on by my guardian, the onus of the miscarriage would be most certainly shifted to my shoulders.

A certain amount of anxiety also attended me on a far different subject, but one requiring

consideration, viz., as to how, when the visit to Debra Tabor had had a successful termination, I was to quit the country ; for should any considerable detention await me beyond that which had already happened, the rains—which had commenced their early slight showers, but which in June pour down in vast sheets, and last during the three ensuing months—would swell the stream of the intervening rivers, especially the Atbara, to such volume as to form an effectual obstacle to my return to the Soudan.

I had failed to come to any definite conclusion respecting my forced return to Serramba. It might have arisen from good faith on the part of the king, who, finding his bellicose enterprise successfully terminated, desired to save me a tedious and dangerous journey through the Galla country, and had therefore given orders for my further detention in the borderland until his arrival ; or it might have been the result of misrepresentation, having for its aim the prevention of my reaching Johannes, for of course it was easy to figure my return to Serramba to the king in any light which might seem desirable, making it appear a determination on my own part proceeding from a disinclination to pene-

trate a perfectly strange and distant land, or the result of indifference, or a breakdown of my travelling appliances. It was extremely probable that, disgusted with my want of perseverance, Johannes might consider it better to arrange the matter by deputy, and thus I should be deterred from any personal interview. I had not been thus long in the land without ascertaining that, if there were two voices in the country, the utterances of a peace and a war party, the latter was in the ascendant, and that the current of feeling on the border was all in favour of war, expressions of bellicose ardour being freely vented in my presence.

CHAPTER IV.

Ethiopia, Past and Present—Massowah—Harrar and Zeylah.

A BYSSINIA is styled by its inhabitants Itiopia, and the monarch adopts as his royal designation, "King of the Kings of Itiopia."

In extent and position, however, the present kingdom differs much from the Ethiopia which formed so prominent a figure in ancient history, that country having consisted of an inaccurately defined but wide-spreading nationality, in which modern Abyssinia, Nubia, and Sennaar were included, and extended its influence over large districts now possessed by Galla and other tribes in the direction of equatorial Africa. The inhabitants of Ethiopia are presumed to have been of Semitic descent, and of common origin with the races of Arabia. They were at an early date

involved with the fortunes of Egypt, and about 1600 B.C. an Ethiopian colony settled in that land. In the eighth century B.C. Egypt was successfully invaded by them, and a dynasty of Ethiopian rulers, who reigned fifty years, was supplied to the country of the Pharaohs. Yet more extended enterprise was evinced by Tirhakah, who in 710 B.C., in conjunction with Hezekiah, attacked Sennacherib, monarch of Assyria. Cambyses subsequently to his devastation of Egypt in 523 B.C., penetrated the kingdom; determined resistance, however, obliged him to retreat, but in 225 B.C. Ptolemy Euergetes III. attacked it with more successful results.

Meroë, a state which included in its limits modern Dongola, and is mentioned by Herodotus as flourishing 450 B.C., was the advanced post of Ethiopian civilization, and extensive remains still attest former grandeur. Its population became early involved with the races inhabiting Northern Africa, and was largely recruited by a settlement of two hundred and forty thousand Egyptians during the reign of Psammeticus, and by the subsequent wholesale exodus of the residents of Thebes upon the approach of Cambyses, who fled thither, trust-

ing to escape his ruthless progress. It was attacked by the victorious Persian in 530 B.C. In 22 A.D. Queen Candace of Meroë marched against the Roman settlement at Elephantine, modern Assouan, but sustained a repulse, and in the reign of Augustus the kingdom was conquered by the Romans.

As the result of this reverse Meroë seems to have suffered eclipse, and the power of Ethiopia in later days was embodied in the kingdom of the Axumitæ, who in the first and second centuries A.D. ruled over Abyssinia, Yemen, and Saba with absolute dominion in the Red Sea, and to whose sovereigns tribute was paid by the Byzantine Emperors.

In 330 A.D. Christianity was preached at Axum, to become, after a death struggle, in a modified form the national faith of Abyssinia, whilst the kingdom of Nubia with Dongola as its capital, after undergoing conversion and remaining Christian until the fourteenth century, submitted itself in time to the Mahomedan pressure bearing on it, and became broken up into Mahomedan principalities. In 1822 Ibrahim Pacha included Nubia in the Pachalik of Egypt, a fate which awaited by degrees all that portion of

ancient Ethiopia not now belonging to the modern kingdom of Abyssinia.

It is difficult to define the limits of a country whose constituent parts have undergone such great past and even recent changes as those of Abyssinia, and over whose outlying territory jurisdiction is more nominally than really exercised. Its national history presents an interminable series of internal dissensions, or of warfare upon neighbouring Galla tribes, and the two great departments of Tigré and Amhara, north and south, occasionally united, have been jointly represented by one monarch under the national designation of "king of the kings of Ethiopia," whilst often in fierce antagonism they have ranged themselves under rival sovereigns enjoying only the minor title of Ras.

The diminutive kingdom of Shoa in the south-eastern extremity, the refuge and seat of government in troublesome times of the lineal descendants of the ancient line of Menilek, has by turns borne the different relations towards northern Abyssinia of a component province, a tributary, and an independent state; it must, however, now be included in the general term Abyssinia.

Since my visit an arrangement was proposed by which the districts of Zeylah and Harrar, a portion of the Soudan on the south-east of Abyssinia, should be ceded by the Egyptian Government to King Johannes; on the other hand, large tracts on the western and northern sides, which once constituted part of Abyssinia, still remain in the possession of the former power. Zeylah and Harrar possess for Abyssinia a strong and melancholy historical interest, for Mahomed Gran, governor of this district in the sixteenth century, ravaged the land and burnt the capital Axum, his action, combined with the revolt of the Galla tribes, destroying the civilization of two thousand years.

Abyssinia, or Habesh (a term derived from the river Hawash surrounding Shoa on the southern and eastern sides), may be at present broadly described as included between long. 35 to 40 degrees, and lat. 9 to 15 degrees; from this must be deducted the territory lying between lat. 13 to 15 degrees, and long. 35 to 37 degrees, which is a portion of the Soudan.

It is a lofty, highland tract of country, and its interior plains attain an elevation of from six hundred to seven hundred feet above sea

level, whilst its mountain peaks rise in some instances to fourteen thousand feet.

The principal rivers are the Mareb and Tecazzé in the north, the Abai (Blue Nile) and Hawash in the south. The Angrab, Mogetsch, Reb, Gomara, Bashilo, and others are comparatively insignificant in size, gathering volume only after the heavy rains, and the Atbara, Rahad, and Dender, though rising in Abyssinia, now complete their courses through alien territory.

On all sides a gradual ascent precedes arrival in the kingdom, and on all save the south it is bounded by Egyptian power, which on the north and west has pushed the boundaries of the Soudan far into former Abyssinian territory, and on the eastern sides exercises jurisdiction over the Danakil and the tribes bordering on the Red Sea. The great inland lake of Tzana or Dembea is a natural basin or reservoir into which the numerous streams pouring from the surrounding mountains discharge themselves after the autumnal down-falls; it is, however, obviously much shrunk in its dimensions from its former size.

The climate is generally healthy, but subject

to great daily variations of temperature, and deep valleys and low-lying grounds exist in which violent malarious fevers are both prevalent and deadly, more especially during the later rainy season.

The country, the population of which may be placed at five millions, is divided nominally into two portions, and the northern half, Tigré, is separated by the river Tecazzé from the southern, Amhara ; they retain different dialects, and the latter alone possesses a written character. All the ancient national and religious documentary records are transcribed in Geez or ancient Ethiopian, whilst the Amharic language has been since the fourteenth century in general use at the court.

The present spoken dialect, as well as the Geez or original tongue, contains undoubted common features with Arabic.

The two portions are subdivided into numerous smaller districts over which Governors are appointed, whilst in southern Amhara there is a province similarly named, from which the more extensive tract derives its designation. The seat of the monarchy has been ordinarily placed at Gondar, in Amhara, to which town it was trans-

ferred in 1699. This department is by far the most picturesque, its lands the most fertile, its provinces the fairest, whilst its warriors—especially the vaunted horsemen of Lasta—are celebrated as the bravest in the kingdom; and, last but not least, superior beauty is claimed for the women.

In Tigré the few remaining monuments of architectural pretensions exist, and at Axum, the capital of the ancient state of the Axumitæ near Adowa, there still stands a group of obelisks and other ruins, long-enduring witnesses to past civilization and greatness.

Any lengthened description of the various dynasties and sovereigns who have wielded power in Abyssinia would be tedious, having been fully described by Bruce and other travellers. As, however, the works containing them may not have been generally read, I append a few lines on the past leading features and fluctuating fortunes of the rulers of the country.

In the national records of the kingdom, entitled the *Kebir Za Negest*, or “glory of the kings,” the earliest traditions trace a fancied descent from Cush, and, after five Pagan dynasties succeeding Arwa the serpent king, subse-

quently proceed to a period boasting an episode possibly equally wanting in authenticity, which relates that Queen Maqueda of Sheba, having heard of the wisdom and glory of Solomon, was fired with curiosity to see that potentate. Strong in her resolve, and carrying magnificent presents, the royal lady set sail from her native land, visited Jerusalem, and, after an honourable reception and stay in that city, returned highly impressed, in due course presenting her subjects with a future ruler and lawgiver in the person of a son, Menilek, the result of the visit.

It is needless to state that the Scriptural accounts are held to corroborate this view of matters by the upholders of Abyssinian greatness and lengthened descent, whilst it is an undoubted fact that at an early date the nation became Jewish.

Menilek ascended the throne 986 B.C. and his descendants are maintained to have held the sceptre uninterruptedly until 960 A.D., and to have adopted the title of Negūs, whilst steadily increasing the power of the kingdom, which in the fourth century had extended its conquests into Arabia. In the early part of the sixth, Caleb, or Elis-

baan, in conjunction with Justinian, confirmed these victories and annexed Yemen. After an occupation, however, lasting sixty years, the Abyssinians were expelled by the Persians and driven across the Red Sea, the latter conquering in return considerable tracts in African territory.

In the meantime, owing to the energetic labours of Frumentius and succeeding proselytizers, the nation, hitherto Mosaic, had become Christian, and in the latter part of the fourth century the religion of Christ was nearly general throughout the land. A powerful section of the Jews had, however, always held aloof from the conversion, maintaining their own religion and ceremonies under an independent ruler, and in 960 A.D. Judith, a princess of great beauty and intelligence, fired their enthusiasm, surprised and massacred the whole of the royal family (it must be here mentioned that it was the established custom, in obedience to the dying injunctions of Queen Maqueda, to imprison in irons on a mountain stronghold, Damo, all members of the royal family not immediately in succession to the throne, in order to prevent ambitious designs on their part, or on that of their partisans),

and declared herself empress, in spite of the law bequeathed by Queen Maqueda, prohibiting female succession to royal dignity. She reigned forty years, and five generations of her race subsequently wielded the government of the kingdom, but, on the accession of a distant branch of the family, the nation returned to Christianity.

The young king of the direct line, on Judith's usurpation, escaped to Shoa, where, surrounded by devoted followers, he maintained his court, and in 1268 A.D. the rule of the country once more passed into the hands of his descendants in the person of Icon Amlak. Of this race Amda Zion at the beginning of the fourteenth century was one of the most able princes, and in 1445 Zara Jacoob sent ambassadors to the council at Florence.

A Mahomedan invasion in 1500, followed by another in 1528, headed by Mahomed Gran, who occupied Amhara, sacked Axum, and reduced Negūs Daved to subjection, paved the way for foreign interference, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Portuguese missionaries gained great influence, aiding the Abyssinians in their conflicts with their Mussulman foe. As a result, in

1600, Peter Paez succeeded in establishing Roman Catholicism in the reign of Za Denghel, as the national faith, with reference to the pope of Rome as highest religious authority.

After much bloodshed and internal civil war, they were finally expelled in 1632 A.D. by Facilidas. Facilidas reigned thirty-three years; his son was of no historical importance, but Yasūs or Joshua I., the "great," made successful war against the Gallas and other tribes, from whose invasions the country had long suffered, and maintained the national honour until 1700. Tecla Haimanout I. followed with a short reign of six years. Tifis, his successor, ruled three.

In 1714, after five years, during which the crown was worn by an alien to the ancient line, David IV. was proclaimed king, then Bacuffa, who died in 1729. Yasūs II. commenced inauspiciously by being excommunicated by the Aboonah (the spiritual head), and having undertaken an expedition against the king of Sennaar, was defeated. He, however, easily crushed a subsequent rebellion headed by Ras Michael, and in a second campaign against Sennaar proved successful. In 1753 he was succeed-

ed by his son Joas, the offspring of his marriage by a Galla woman, and in this reign the rivalry and hatred which had so long existed between the Abyssinians and the Gallas, and had led to constant warfare and bloodshed, culminated in open revolt against the sovereign, who had introduced not only favourites, but also the habits, customs, and language of his mother's nation. His assassination followed shortly after, and Tecla Haimanout II., after the six months' reign of Johannes I., mounted the throne in 1768 a nominal monarch, all real power being wielded by Ras Michael.

Weldo Selassy succeeded in 1791, and died in 1816. Sabagardis reigned from 1816 to 1830, but from 1778 to 1833 fourteen different rival claimants in all disputed, and for a short time held, sovereign power.

In 1847 Ras Ali was sovereign of Amhara, Ras Ubié of Tigré, and Sahela Selassy of Shoa. The two former were deposed in 1855 by Theodorus Lick Kassa, who was crowned at that date and once more united all Habesh under his sway; but in consequence of the bombardment and capture of Magdala, into which fortress he had thrown himself, by the British expedition

under Sir R. Napier in April, 1868, he committed suicide, and Prince Kasa of Tigré, the present king, under the title of Johannes II., was placed upon the throne, and having overcome in June, 1871, Gobazzie of Amhara, was finally crowned at Axum in 1872.

Shortly after his accession a war in Egypt commenced in 1875, and in two engagements the Abyssinians were victorious, but in 1876 they were defeated and hostilities were relinquished. Johannes attacked Menilek, King of Shoa, with success in 1877, from which period that kingdom has been tributary.

The country has been, since the possession of Massowah by Egypt, entirely shut off from the sea-board, and is surrounded on all sides by its hereditary foe, a fatal and certain impediment to development of commercial instincts if they existed; moreover, such insulation produces in natural course an exclusiveness and ignorance of the habits and customs of other nations, most unfavourable to the reception of new ideas or to any progress beyond the old conventional modes of life.

Massowah, Souakim, and Zeylah, ports on the eastern coast of Africa, were taken by the Turks

in 1577. Massowah, an island lying off the coast of Abyssinia, was garrisoned by the conquerors with four hundred men, who, however, became intimate with the natives of the mainland, the Habab, intermarried with them, and adopted their manners and language, falling by degrees under Abyssinian ascendancy. They continued, however, to pay tribute to Turkey, their chief being by that nation deputed to rule Massowah, the adjoining coast, and the town of Arkiko, with the title of Naib.

In the seventeenth century, as Turkish power in the Red Sea decayed, the Governor of Massowah fell more and more under Abyssinian influence, paid tribute to that power, and was entitled Bahr Negūs, or Sovereign of the Seas. Towards the close of the eighteenth century the Governor of Yemen and Mecca seized Massowah, and reduced the pay of the Naib's retainers, and in 1814 it submitted to Mehemet Ali, who appointed a Kaimakan. This official repudiated the title of Habab to claim revenues from the Porte, so he utterly suspended the reduced salaries previously paid. A revolt succeeded, and he was forced to flee, to be, however, in a few months re-established, the Turks retaining Massowah,

but paying a fixed yearly sum. In 1841 the treaty of peace which made Mehemet Pacha hereditary viceroy of Egypt ceded these three ports of Massowah, Souakim, and Zeylah to that Pachalik. In Zeylah, Abyssinia would acquire what she has so long coveted, an independent port, and it would be interesting to note the manner in which the concession would be utilized. The present monarch enjoys advantages which have been denied to his predecessors for centuries, the kingdom is united, and Shoa and the surrounding Galla tribes have acknowledged his virtual supremacy. A port would afford him free and unfettered communication with European countries.

CHAPTER V.

Early Inhabitants—Clothing—Arms—Hair Ornamentation—Marriage Customs—Family Affection—Little Sentiment—Domestic Slavery—The Year—Soil and Agriculture—Unsettled Condition—Literature—Cattle—Villages—Tools—Bread, Beer, Wine—General Landscape—Roads.

THE original descent of the nation is conjectural, tradition, which assigns their mountainous tracts as the early seat of the Cushites, differing with generally received history, which has decided on placing the son of Ham in Arabia. The latter country is, however, at its southwestern extremity divided by but a narrow streak of sea from the opposite mainland, and it is possible that the immediate descendants of Cush may have passed over into Ethiopia.

The early inhabitants who populated its highlands extended gradually over the neighbouring country, eventually becoming persistent and

powerful foes to the yet earlier established kingdom of Egypt, derived also from the claimed common progenitor Ham.

The countenance of the Abyssinian is decidedly of Caucasian type, and differs widely from that of the Negro races inhabiting central and western Africa, and whilst the complexion varies through all shades of colour, from olive to black, the latter hue and the broader features occasionally met with are comparatively exceptional, and may be attributed to admixture with alien races; the figure is slighter, and the hair, though crisp, is far finer than that distinguishing negro Africans. The Abyssinian males possess a fair share of good looks, and are more bountifully endowed by nature in this respect than the females, who are, however, well-shaped and lissome, and boast often very beautiful eyes. The head is invariably uncovered with both sexes, the priesthood excepted, who wear turbans, and a hood is adopted in the open air by women of the better class. Etiquette demands also that the monarch shall be covered in public, but on only one occasion did I observe the royal head protected within doors; when this occurred the article worn resembled a white cotton night-cap.

The clothes worn by Abyssinians of all classes differ principally in the quality of the material, and but little in style. The main feature of native dress is the "kwarry," which may be described as universal; this is a square of cotton about nine feet long by eight feet broad, sometimes entirely white, but as often composed of three breadths, the central one being red and woven in between the outer two. This garment is first placed over the back, the right side is then thrown across the left shoulder, whilst the left end is caught up and passed over the right shoulder; the right arm is thus left free for action. It resembles much in appearance the toga of the ancient Romans. Although I have before remarked the ordinary cotton cloth made is of coarse texture, finer descriptions are manufactured at Gondar, the best being finished with coloured silk borders.

As the natives are unskilful in dyeing, they purchase Surat or Turkey red and blue stuffs, which they unpick and weave into their own materials. Like all eastern and lightly-dressed nations, they envelope the centre of the body with many folds of thick cotton material, varying in volume, but measuring often twenty-

five yards in length ; these cummurbunds may be said to form a garment in themselves, and are relied upon not only as a protection from changes of temperature, but also as safeguards from swordcuts, and this service they no doubt effectually perform against the very indifferent weapons in general use. In addition they become the receptacle for any money or valuables in a portable form the property of their wearers. Cotton drawers envelope the limbs of the Habesh, reaching to the knee or extending a foot below it, and are tight or loose according to the fancy. A more picturesque dress is in vogue with the higher classes, which is, however, comparatively rare. This I have fully described in a later place as worn by Ras Alulu, and is composed of a tunic of fine white material, leaving the throat bare and reaching below the knee, pleated in the body and bound around the waist by a girdle of many folds, usually of coloured silk ; long hanging sleeves commencing from the shoulder, or in some instances from the elbow, and corresponding in colour and material with the girdle, complete the dress ; gold ornaments adorn the neck and ankles according to taste. But it is quite usual to find the man of

position clothed in the ordinary loose garment, made only of a somewhat finer texture than that of the peasant.

The sword is the only weapon carried by the official and better class. The rank and file are armed with sword, buckler, and spears; for, in spite of the partial introduction of fire-arms, these weapons still remain in the ascendant. All rifles are of foreign manufacture, and the difficulties attending the import of special ammunition for them are great, and their varying patterns hardly yet understood. I found no native possessed of a gun in any manner acquainted with the use of the back sight, and cartridges were made up with an utter disregard to evenness of propelling force.

The swords of the more pretentious descriptions are protected by red leathern scabbards carrying at the end a small silver ball. They vary in shape, and whilst on the western frontier they are nearly straight, many worn at the court are curved into a complete semi-circle, and all arcs of the circle are represented. The very curved ones are used principally in the south and in the kingdom of Shoa; in Tigré, in Begemder, and Dembea, blades are sloped back from about

two-thirds of the length from the hilt, which is composed of horn or rhinoceros hide, in many cases ornamented with silver; guards are uncommon except in the inferior weapons. The sword is suspended from the right hand side, and the belt is worn invariably, in the interior of the kingdom, around the waist.

The skins of wild animals are much affected by those who can obtain them, covering the shoulders in much the same manner as that recently adopted by ladies in England, and a black waterproof cape of tent material of a larger size is sometimes adopted in heavy rain.

The Mateb, or baptismal cord, is *de rigueur*, and worn when nothing else is. It formed the only clothing of the young at Serramba, but was frequently added to with amulets, sure safeguards against sorcery. Such as possess them carry portions of the Scriptures in a wooden-bound manuscript book, contained in a leathern case, and slung across the shoulders like a pair of race-glasses.

Spears are of several descriptions; the lighter sort for hurling, composed of bamboo, are five and a half feet in length, their iron heads measuring one foot; the heavier weapons are six and

and a half feet long, the heads measuring two to three feet. The heads vary in shape, but are usually of the form best known, a diamond of which the upper half is prolonged; the spears are all weighted at the butt with a coil of iron from three to six inches in length; considerable art is exercised in their construction, and they are often ingeniously and tastefully made.

The shields are of hardened hide, and of convex form; a strong leathern handle in the interior affords the means by which they are grasped, and a slight thong passed through two or more holes in their outer circumference is used for suspending them when not actively employed. They are variously ornamented, most usually by decorations formed of beaten out Maria Theresa dollars, and from fifteen to thirty of these coins are expended in adorning the bucklers of those able to afford such extravagance.

The hair is the portion of the person on which the Abyssinian most relies for ornamentation, and many and various are the forms in which it is displayed. Occasionally it is cut quite close to the head, and whiskers are worn completely encircling the face, but rarely reaching the dimensions of a beard, being clipped short by scissors.

Sometimes the hair is short and curly in a manner affected now and then by boys and young ladies in England, but the really fashionable manner is to indulge in a multiplicity of partings from four to twelve in number, and a large knot of the remaining hair is gathered up behind, and falls in a club at the back of the neck. The last style is the one also most in vogue with ladies, but in their case the number of partings from back to front is increased, and may reach as many as twenty-four, whilst one at right angles crossing the forehead allows a fringe to fall forward and crown, in European fashion, the wearer's face; the hair is as well elaborately plaited behind in a bunch. Of course these forms of coiffure occupy a considerable time in perfecting, but, once finished, they are worn without alteration for possibly a month, being periodically refreshed with large lumps of butter.

The dress of the women of the peasant class is ordinarily a loose white chemise or tunic, short in the arms, but reaching below the knee, and gathered in or not at the waist, according to the wearer's fancy, by a string; they also very often assume the "kwarry," or male garment.

It is usual among both sexes to occasionally

wear that garment in such manner as to expose the right breast and arm, leaving the latter perfectly free, whilst the unbaring of both shoulders, holding the garment on the chest, is a mark of humility, and is performed in the presence of superiors.

The women are all very fond of such ornaments as fall within their means, but these rarely exceed strings of fancy beads, worn around the arm and neck.

Slave women have merely a cloth fastened about their middle, the ends hanging carelessly down about two feet long; they are otherwise without personal concealment.

The wives of the upper classes wear a long loose garment of fine white cotton stuff, in many cases of English manufacture, with fancy work of various colours and patterns adorning it, under vest of silk, and, in addition to the inevitable blue baptismal cord, silver chains and strings of silver beads around the neck, to which will be possibly suspended a small box containing some potent charm. Bracelets on the arms, anklets on the legs, and elaborate large hair-pins in the back hair all form portions of the "get-up" of a lady of fashion; the shoes (but seldom worn)

are usually of red leather, clumsy in construction and very much curved back at the toe, in exaggerated similitude to the Turkish custom.

It will be thus seen that the recent introduction of silver ornaments in England has long been anticipated by the softer sex in Abyssinia, but they are in other respects far behind their European sisters in the mysteries of the toilette ; and, although they employ means for darkening the eyes and pencilling the eyebrows, scent the person and stain the finger and toe nails, their unguents for the finishing touches to the hair are primitive and sickening.

Outside the house the lady's charms are concealed by a large white hood, which falls over and below the shoulders. On horseback the position adopted is the masculine one, and the same small stirrups are employed by women as by men.

I cannot say much in compliment to the cleanly nature of either sex, and I never lived amongst any people who did less washing ; this indifference extends even to their clothing, and it is considered rather "chic" by the higher class to appear with a dingy wrapper. Now the Mahomedan neighbour, although not given to

wholesale ablutions, invariably devotes his face and hands to a cleansing process, and his linen is ever unexceptionable.

An ordinary Abyssinian marriage does not require the intervention of the church, but is performed before witnesses. As in other countries, the lady's dower is a matter of serious consideration, and the property which each contracting party vouches for must be verified, and becomes from the moment of the union of joint ownership. It is usual to agree upon a fixed period at the end of which the engagement can be renewed or terminated at will, and it is a form of covenant which, not taking so high a view of matrimonial obligations as our own, is possibly more in accordance with fallible and inconstant human nature, and removes the painful necessity of a Divorce Court with its accompanying sensational and thrilling histories. Should there be any family on separation, an amicable division of the children takes place, the wife appropriating the male, the husband the female offspring. As there is no disgrace attached to a lady who has found a change of partners desirable, so also there is no stigma affixed to a child whose parents may have varied.

It is sad to be obliged to state that, little irksome as these easy conditions should prove, nature does not rise superior to temptation, and inconstancy is not unknown; happily for the endurance of these terminable love-bonds, native manliness easily forgives feminine weakness, and the punishment for detected frailty is a severe lecture, and possibly a beating. Morality of the highest order should not possibly be sought for in this kingdom, where a far lower value is assigned to chastity than in European countries, and, whilst a breach of matrimonial promise would be highly resented, seduction is adjusted by a nominal fine of a few pence.

Family affection is not fostered by these temporary unions, and dissension and hatred between blood relatives are general, but I detected no signs of sentimental weakness amongst Abyssinians, either male or female; they are terribly matter of fact, and, beyond the natural early love of a mother for her child, it may be doubted if much affection exists. The loosening of domestic bonds naturally diminishes family love, which is greatly the growth of propinquity in early life, and the constant separation of members of one family when still young

causes an estrangement between them as complete as that existing amongst those unconnected by blood-relationship.

But little chivalrous feeling enters into the relations between the two sexes, and no useless waste of time is observed by the male in endeavours to instil by higher moral precept what is clearly in his power to enforce by superior masculine vigour. There is of course again scriptural authority in abundance to authorize the assertion of marital ascendancy by the rudest form of correction, and there exists apparently on the male side no aversion to a recourse to such means, and on the female no surprise at its exercise.

Should an irate husband box his helpmate's ears, or summarily condense half an hour of possible recrimination into a five minutes' audience of a thick stick, no high sense of the outraged dignity of womanhood would strike the victim dumb, nor would injured sensibility distil a silent flood of anguished tears; but, if there appeared a fair chance of no great preponderance of power on the male part, the lady would at once return the blow. If, however, this course of conduct seemed hopeless, she would pour a heavy

load of loud and stinging insults on her chastising lord.

I have before remarked there exists but little sentiment in Abyssinia, and possibly in no other nation does the male disembarass himself so successfully of the tenderer emotions; man seems to find all his pleasure in the society of those of his own sex, undisturbed alike by the poetry of reverent love or the prose of sexual passion. Life is too primitive to develop luxurious tastes.

With women of all climes, in all stages of social progression, there is a natural desire for admiration, and the gentle Abyssinian forms no exception to the general rule. Blessed with but few of the adventitious aids to coquetry employed by her more fortunate European sisters, the challenges issued by her to command appreciation are necessarily of a somewhat palpable and summary order. Sadly enough, no more here than in Europe does the acquisition of one lawfully constituted admirer prevent the wedded one from aspiring to worshipping glances from other devotees, and a very liberal use of languishing eyes is in general made to command proper attention to the merits of their owners, married or single. This weakness forces me to acknowledge

that flirtation, when indulged in by ladies of great natural simplicity and elementary toilettes, becomes a somewhat strongly accentuated performance, and is distinguished by the same necessary inferiority which would attach to conflicts waged by wild, undisciplined valour as against those conducted by trained tacticians. Scientific preliminaries become considerably reduced, great faith is reposed in rapidity of attack, the whole force is brought into action at once, and but little reliance is placed on reserves.

In consequence of the allotment of hard household tasks to the women, it is one of the earliest conditions made by the future bride that servants shall be kept in even the humblest class, and, as slavery is general through Abyssinia, the severest domestic labours fall upon these outcasts, who are, however, not unkindly treated. A vast number of these drudges are captives resulting from successful campaigns amongst the southern Gallas, and it is from tribes bordering on the equator also that recruits are furnished in sufficient quantity to provide every family of even moderate pretensions with a slave. The monarch derives from the sale of the captives much of his revenue, and

Abyssinia and Arabia are now the great employers of African slave labour.

The year in Abyssinia is the solar year, and consists of twelve months of thirty days, with five or six intercalary days. The years for convenience are named after the Evangelists, St. John being the bissextile. The same authorities are also used to mark the four quarters of the year. Scriptural references are always favoured in the kingdom.

The soil of the land is rich and fertile, but agriculture is but little practised or understood. Vast herds of cattle form the great occupation and wealth of the inhabitants, and grain sufficient for home consumption, and rough roots to satisfy the wants of their beasts, are raised without any progressive ambition for the farther development of the soil. Teff, barley, and wheat, cotton, coffee, capsicums, and chilis are lazily cultivated, cotton grows apparently wild, and the natural resources of so prolific a country might, under more favourable circumstances, be rendered remunerative and illimitable, but at present, owing to habits of restlessness and long-established insecurity of possession, apathy and indifference to the accumulation of what

may never be enjoyed present insuperable obstacles to improved and extended husbandry.

Again tenure of land is merely traditional, and undefended by legal and constitutional forms; right, if contested, is hard to establish and maintain, and the existence of this uncertainty alone suffices to deter industry and enterprise. There, however, exists among the people no desire to accumulate wealth by steady labour; they are all acquisitive, but it is merely in a lazy, importunate form. The expectation and acceptance of donations is a national characteristic, but industry and perseverance are not indigenous, and await the regeneration of Abyssinian nature.

In a land plunged in a chronic state of bloodshed and lawlessness for centuries, owing to the struggles of conflicting leaders for supremacy, and in which every plain has been a battle-field, when the universal call to arms at a few days' notice is a national law, and the progress of the monarch is the signal for the subject to rise and accompany him to the field, the husbandman becomes merged in the warrior, the slower and more laborious duties of domestic life

devolve upon the aged and infirm, whilst the sturdy and younger members of the community follow the more adventurous and congenial career of arms.

The highest ambition of the Habesh is to be accounted a redoubtable warrior, excelling in martial sports in intervals of peace, undaunted and terrible to his foes in time of war ; merciless deeds are accounted heroic feats, and disgusting trophies gathered from the bodies of his victims swell his reputation, and gain him as high a place in the estimation of his fellow-soldiers as the scalps paraded by the Red Indian succeed in securing for him amongst his race.

From these causes may be traced the general indisposition to steady lines of life ; and the constant inclination on the part of provinces and tribes at a distance from the seat of government to wage sanguinary feuds amongst themselves, or raise the standard of revolt for some discontented or ambitious enemy to the existing sovereign, keep the kingdom in an unsettled and feverish condition, highly inconducive to more sober pursuits. There is no intermediate class between government officials and persons in a subservient position, nor is there any resident

landed class without official position. The country possesses no literature, nor is any educational test required for the qualification of officials; what learning exists is in the hands of the priesthood, and it is a rare accomplishment for officials to have acquired the knowledge of reading and writing.

Books are manuscript, and remain in the guardianship of the Monastic Institutions; the most primitive form of printing press is unknown. This absence of art and literature applies equally of course to all Ethiopia, but as Abyssinia has been regarded as a constituted kingdom of ancient standing, considerably in advance of the several less known nations or tribes inhabiting central Africa, it is as well to mention what is the present condition of the land. The only road to promotion in life leads through the bloody scenes of war, and warlike deeds or unscrupulous adherence to a chosen leader offer the sole means of preferment.

As before mentioned, cattle form the peasants' chief care; the flesh is valuable as food, the cows give milk, and hides and horns form one of the most considerable articles of trade. In addition to these uses, taxation or tribute is principally

paid in kine, and cattle-rearing and cattle-tending are therefore universally practised.

The villages scattered about the plains, valleys, and sides of mountains are assemblages of round, thatched houses, which vary in size and number from six to thirty dwellings, dreadfully dirty, and inhabited indiscriminately by man and beast; sanitary precautions are entirely neglected, and heaps of refuse gather around each house. At night the various members of the family retire to rest, lying in a row on the ground, and cover themselves with their wrappers and occasional dried skins.

In many instances the dwellings possess separate compartments for some favoured individuals, just large enough to hold one or two. Straw is laid down as bedding by the more luxurious, and hides are employed to keep them from the damp ground. Bedsteads of a very primitive order, constructed by strips of hide interlaced, and stretched across wooden supports, are rare, but in use by the more thriving; these, however, are usually so rickety and badly made, and frequently so shrunk by exposure to the sun, that they seldom boast four legs of equal length, and

it becomes a matter of nice adjustment to balance the person on their tottering frames.

Unless very heavy rains were falling, I found it preferable in all cases to repose in the open air, to seeking a shelter in these very unpleasant dwellings, with the certain attendance of nocturnal swarms of fleas, and the knowledge that I was the disturber of the comfort of an entire household.

The drudgery, usually performed by slave-women, where these luxuries are not possessed falls upon the various female members of the household; it being beneath manly dignity to carry wood or water, and to grind corn or knead bread; all the hard laborious domestic tasks devolve on feminine execution. Wood is used for cooking and heating purposes, and a fire is almost invariably burning in the evening in all houses, in the centre of the dwelling. As there are no chimneys even of the most primitive kind, the smoke is absolutely blinding, and in time the roof becomes black with soot, and long hanging cobwebs form a conspicuous household decoration. Much of the wood is odoriferous, and gives forth in burning an extremely pleasant smell.

So primitive and rare are tools that the people are ordinarily indebted to fire for the means of securing large branches or trunks of trees for fuel, literally burning them around the base until they fall. I cannot say that I saw many tools, and the most advanced agricultural implement I met with was a plough at Mahdera Mariam, drawn by two oxen yoked together by a bar of wood. The instrument was a pike shod with iron, and weighted with a large heavy block of granite; this turned up the soil in a feeble way, for which moderate success it was principally indebted to the rich and mouldy nature of the ground.

Sword-blades and cutlery are made at Gondar and Kiratza, in the province of Begamder. The cutlery, consisting of razors, scissors, tweezers, and needles, are of most inferior manufacture, and the Abyssinian with some reason declines shaving, and usually cuts his beard short with scissors. Beards are the conventional outward adornment of the priesthood.

The ordinary food is bread, and I do not think I can better describe its appearance than by stating that it resembles a large pancake, a foot and a half in diameter, and half an inch

thick ; it is of various qualities, and is made of teff, barley, or wheat, the finer descriptions being of the latter. Teff bread is in most general use, and is constantly flavoured with red pepper ; I could never, however, learn to like it, and on all possible occasions had special wheat bread made in a more European-like fashion. Milk and native beer (bouza and tulla), made of fermented barley and water, are the principal beverages. Meat and honey wine (mezze or tedj) are both looked upon as luxuries. The bread is carried in very neat wicker baskets of many coloured patterns, and constructed exactly to hold it, twenty to thirty layers being the contents of a basket.

I have not hitherto described how the honey wine in general use among the upper classes is made, and as I engaged a native servant, Baldo Mariam, who was specially skilled in its manufacture, I will now proceed to impart the information. The component proportions vary from one of honey to four or eight of water. I cannot recommend the latter strength myself, and never made it weaker than one to five. These are placed in a jar, and exposed to the rays of the sun for one or two days, herbs possessed of a

bitter flavour (gesho) being previously added, and it is in the quality of these herbs used, and the time they are allowed to remain in the wine, that the great difference of flavour consists. I constantly fancied that the wine offered me was not sweet enough, whereas it would of course be ordinarily the impression that hydromel must be necessarily very sweet. The fluid, if made originally strong, is improved by keeping, and will remain good for months; it ought not in any case to be consumed in less than a week after its manufacture.

The quantities drunk by natives struck me as prodigious. It affects the head, and occasions stupefaction, but the exhilaration produced by lighter grape-made wines is wanting, and quarrelsomeness and stupidity are the usual sequences of over-indulgence; that it can produce nausea and headache I am prepared to vouch.

The Abyssinian is very convivial by disposition, and passionately attached to intoxicating beverages. I found that nothing came amiss, and a present of claret, curaçoa, or absinthe, would cause the recipient at once to indulge in the most lavish outbursts of gratitude; my hand was promptly seized between his two and conveyed

to his lips with abundant expressions of pleasure and servility.

Villages are not by any means confined to the plains, but are frequently planted about the mountain side, in many instances at great height, and in the most awkward and dangerous-looking situations. The mountains themselves are occasionally richly covered, but are generally rather bare and bleak-looking, and grey in colour, conveying, after a short acquaintance with them, an unsatisfied and hungry longing for the deep and velvety verdure of dense forest-clad scenery. A cold tone too frequently prevails in Abyssinian landscape save in the valleys, and the hillside lacks pinks and purples, and warmth and depth of shade and colour ; this is, in a great measure, due to the arid condition of the grass, withered and yellow by long absence of rain, and by the glare of fierce and scorching suns.

During the autumnal season, the herbage rapidly assumes a fresher hue, torrents innumerable rush foaming along their rocky causeways, and everywhere abundance of water swells the streams and fertilises the adjacent lands. On the other hand, after a lengthened period of dry weather, the rivers of Abyssinia dwindle into

comparatively insignificant brooks connecting occasional standing pools of stagnant water, green with unwholesome verdure; to these, however, the neighbouring inhabitants are compelled to resort for water, and, as any sort of filtering process is unknown, much sickness results.

Sycamores, cedars, palms, huge cacti, occasionally growing in masses, and graceful feathery Girar and Kusso-trees adorn the landscape with their waving shapes, whilst an abundant growth of mimosas, acacias, and shrubs of varied sorts forms a deeper background; creepers are many and carry a pretty red and pink blossom. Honeysuckle and wild convolvuli in luxurious masses twine round supporting trees and bushes, and grow about the ground. The Khumqual (euphorbia) consists of a cedar-like trunk ten to twenty feet in height, with about thirty colossal cucumber-like arms diverging from its top. I could not avoid comparing it in my mind with a many-bladed penknife.

The shrubs, especially the shum-bacqua, with a bamboo-like stem, are often very pretty; its complicated clusters of vegetable tubes are most delicately formed, and, themselves brightly green,

spring from smaller branches of a deep brown colour ; it bears neither leaves nor flowers. The tingueet has a pretty yellow blossom, is very abundant, and highly perfumed, and an unusual favourite with the busy bee. Bamboos do not attain great size and strength in this country, but are very extensively employed, and compose the handles of their spears, long walking-sticks, fans, umbrellas, and the internal decorations of their houses.

Roads do not exist in the European sense, and the highways are only distinguishable by the increased indentations of mule and horse-hoof marks. There are neither carts nor carriages in the country, nor indeed any method of locomotion more luxurious than walking or riding. Bridges are most rare, and rivers have to be forded or swum even by womankind.

CHAPTER VI.

Quit Serramba—My Followers—Barambaras's Amenities
 —His Friend from Semyen—Wanted an Umbrella—
 Rain—Daioffa Alulu's Domains—My Lodgings—Barambaras is Pleasant—Farewell to him—An Old Friend—Doubts.

ON the 16th, with renewed feelings of hope, I again prepared to quit Serramba, and, very shortly after dawn, some men made their appearance for the purpose of removing my baggage. On this occasion I had determined to travel as light as possible, and most of my things were packed with the intention of leaving them at Chelga until my return. The difficulties occurring twice daily of packing had impressed themselves so forcibly on me on my last journey that I had determined on this occasion to lessen as far as possible the annoyance and delay attending the process. My Arab domestics

were almost useless at such work, and indeed it was not their vocation; but I had found also that the escort furnished by Barambaras executed the task under protest, lazily and unwillingly. Wishing to be independent, I had therefore engaged the services of a native, Baldo Mariam, who with a subordinate, and a little assistance, managed the loading and unloading from this period with a celerity and ease which differed pleasantly from the former bungling.

Baldo Mariam was a character, sixty years of age and very tall, his frame was gaunt and bony; no vestige of hair graced his long, narrow head; a prominent hooked nose, and brown eyes which looked grey, were the principal features of a very thin countenance, wearing ordinarily an impressively serious aspect. Not that he really was so; and, grand as were his powers of simulating the gravity becoming his years, I constantly surprised him with a twinkle in his eye, and a happy internal chuckle which denoted keen inward enjoyment. At such moments of detection he always at first looked supremely guilty, but finished with a smile which took quite five minutes to envelop his entire face, terminating with the many wrinkles which furrowed his endless

forehead. He was hale and hard-working, walked usually the whole day, and, what was curious, was in possession of sufficient means to make him accounted wealthy by those he lived amongst; but he was a thrifty man, and considered the occasion of my arrival was one to be improved, and all dignity was waived in the desire to amass a few dollars.

A wonderfully favourable specimen of his race, he accompanied me throughout my residence in Abyssinia, eventually quitting me at Gallabat. His native astuteness sufficed to make him a favourite with my domestics, whom I perceived with quiet amusement he judiciously managed, and I became aware also that the religious scruples of those Habesh who lived side by side with foreigners for any time were not of that stern, unyielding stuff I had at first supposed them. I was grieved when I observed that gastronomic weakness caused him to fall slightly under the autocratic sway of my cook Mahomed; but, as that foible had not spared the mighty Barambaras, "the key of the frontier," invincibility was not to be expected from a humble satellite.

On this morning he had early commenced the

superintendence of my effects, and, when the heavier portion had been removed, had followed to expedite the packing at the other end. When everything had been sent down, and whilst I was awaiting the signal for departure, a feud between Mahomed and Fadl el Moula, which had been long simmering, burst into flame. They flew at each other with short whips, and used them with the greatest vigour and spirit. Mahomed accused Fadl el Moula of pecuniary shortcomings and want of good faith to the interests he represented, whilst the latter retaliated by stating that my private stores had been sold by Mahomed to Barambaras. I was, alas! aware that both stories were perfectly true, and also that there was not one of my followers in whom I could place the slightest reliance; but I had from the commencement expected nothing better, and I had started with the knowledge of their worthlessness.

I felt no partiality for either of the combatants, both of whom I knew to be rogues, but separated them as quietly as I could, and fortunately there had been but few spectators to the scene. This quarrel was but one of many between my own followers, giving me constant annoyance,

and adding to the difficulties of my position, already sufficiently complicated by the uncertain conduct of the Abyssinians, and the duplicity of my interpreters.

Shortly after this, a message arrived from Barambaras, requesting the presence of the two linguists, but specially stating that he did not require me. I thought this decidedly unceremonious, but, not wishing to throw any obstacle in the way of departure, I dispatched them with injunctions to return as soon as possible.

Half an hour elapsed, then an hour; at the expiration of an hour and a half, they returned reeling, eyes half closed, the vacant smile of inebriety on their faces, ten-syllabled words of drunkenness on the tongue. I saw, of course, that they would be almost useless during the day, and mentally thanked my guardian for his kind attentions to my interest.

Eliminating them from my calculations, I walked away to the well-known ledge. How Ahmed got off the mount I never knew, but I fancy that his manner of effecting descents which troubled him, by converting himself into a human sledge, was successfully adopted, as he eventually appeared on the far side, looking

happy, but out of repair. There was the usual indifference of the Abyssinians to expedite departure. Mules were browsing about; in place of twenty-nine I could find about twenty, and their condition was even more deplorable than on the last occasion, many looking more fit for immediate burial than for a long and fatiguing journey; no satisfaction was afforded me respecting the missing ones. Wishing, however, to get on in any possible manner, I bustled about; my servants behaved well, Baldo Mariam was energetic, chased the mules, caught them, and assisted vigorously in loading them when captured, and we were nearly ready when the great man appeared upon the scene, prepared, I believe, to find discomfiture.

He was supported on either side by a follower, a decidedly necessary measure, as he swayed about in an alarmingly dangerous manner. His evil spirit was in the ascendant, and he cast a glance of sinister and sarcastic import at me, bending forward with a wicked smile. In an imperious tone he then demanded why we were not ready, and, throwing himself on a mule, declared his intention of moving off at once without the baggage animals.

At this moment, however, he remembered the presence of a guest whom he introduced to me as a king's messenger deputed to accompany me on my route.

The messenger, a slight, sickly-looking man with a most deceitful cast of countenance, informed me that he was a native of Semyen in Tigré, that he was sent specially to take charge of me, and trusted to be great friends with me on the road to the king. Of course I made a civil rejoinder, but I had by this time got so suspicious of Abyssinian subtlety and hoaxes that I was quite on my guard against my present friend, whose facial lineaments were insincere and unprepossessing, whilst his manner was fawning and oily. "Did I know Tigré?" he asked. No! Then perhaps I was not aware that in certain districts fever was rife, and that when once caught was difficult to shake off. He was now recovering from a long illness, and his indisposition was much increased by exposure to the fierce rays of the sun and the wetting storms of rain—in fact he might say, tracing things to a first cause, by the want of an umbrella: and even as he spoke it was perfectly evident that the latter inclemency would very shortly have to be

encountered, for the clouds were black and low, and a rustling wind was running along the heath with a warning gusty murmur.

Now my umbrella, a strong white covered one, I had found so servicable in the fluctuating climate that I never quitted it, and this was well known; it was always suspended at my saddle-bow ready for immediate action, and I saw as he assumed a piteous look of extra illness that his eyes, first taking in my face, fell gradually in a ludicrous, petitioning way to that faithful friend. No, the attack was too palpable, and my presence of mind did not succumb. I remembered a cheap and gaudy sunshade with a blue lining possessed by Mahomed, and, beckoning him to me, I bestowed it on the wily man of Tigré, with many injunctions to take care of his valuable health, and was rewarded by seeing that he was discomfited, and I knew that the whole scene had been previously concerted.

We moved off, Barambaras leading, a couple of men running beside him; but hardly had we covered a mile when the rain was upon us in blinding streams, and hailstones of great size fell with bewildering force. Everybody was speedily wet through, and I was pleased to see

my hypocritical friend soaked in spite of the umbrella, and looking, I was certain, very miserable. The men of the escort halted under every available tree affording the slightest shelter, whilst the more sensible took off their clothes, made them into bundles, and jogged on in nature's waterproofs.

The tracks became most difficult to traverse from their slippery condition, the mules, in the meantime unguarded, strayed from the path on either side, their bundles slipped round, the animals themselves slipped up, and in every direction animated chases had to be undertaken after mules kicking and plunging in their endeavours to get quit of their burdens, and bolting away in the direction of herbal delicacies, themselves and their loads literally streaming with water.

However, we ambled along until, on arrival at a small village, Barambaras announced his intention of going no farther. He installed his precious person in the best house, and left me to shift for myself as I could. At length, after trying one or two huts, all of which laboured under some disadvantage and were generally blessed with perforated roofs, I entered a large

cow-shed, in which were some forty animals, and, although sadly crowded, I took up my abode with four-footed friends. They were extremely civil to me, and beyond treading on my feet, and placing an occasional damp nose in my face, behaved with perfect propriety.

I remained here an hour, when finding that the rain had somewhat abated, and that Barambaras was asleep, I determined to push on and reach the spot previously proposed for the night's halt. It was drawing in towards evening when I came in sight of the market-place and principal village of Chelga, passing to the rear of which a slight ascent led to the residence of Daiossa Alulu, Shêk of the market.

An isolated hill, of possibly a hundred feet in height and of gradual slope, was surrounded at its summit by a four-foot wall built of rough blocks of piled-up, unhewn stone. Within the enclosure, about fifty feet in diameter, were a dozen dwellings; the principal one, constructed of uncemented stone, was faced by a rather smaller one constituting the general stable, and at a slight distance, scattered about on the opposite side, stood the remaining houses, rickety thatched erections. One of these was assigned to me, the

state apartments (or stone house) being devoted to the local monarch.

Daioffa Alulu, who came forward to welcome me, was a favourable specimen of his nationality, and, had he not been acting under superior orders, was disposed to be kind and friendly. He was short in stature, with a good-humoured expression of face, was attired somewhat differently from the generality, and wore over his wrapper a fur tippet which covered his shoulders and terminated in four long tails hanging down and reaching to about his middle. It was a curious article of clothing to carry on a hot summer day, and I doubted whether the additional dignity derived therefrom was not dearly purchased by the obvious inconvenience sustained, for the warmth of the garment was evident in his countenance, and at an early opportunity he removed it with a sigh of relief.

It was not proposed that I should be the sole tenant of the mansion indicated, my host, an aged gentleman, and his daughter obviously intending to remain and entertain me. When I entered they were crouching on the ground around a wood fire in the centre of the room, which was filled with a dense smoke. Having

wished them salaam, and hastily informed them that everything was melkum (good), I rushed out as quickly as I could, half choked, with my eyes streaming with water, coughing and sneezing alternately. When the young lady understood how trying I found the atmosphere, she stirred up the fuel into a blaze, reducing the smoke considerably, and I tried not to think it unpleasant. There was a small portion of the hut, seven feet long by four in width, partitioned off by split bamboos from the remainder ; in this straw was laid down, and I prepared to dine and take my rest. I cannot say that there was great privacy about my dormitory, as the interstices between the bamboos enabled me to see and be seen ; but I knew I was partaking of the highest luxuries understood by them, and felt fully satisfied.

Whilst I enjoyed one of Mahomed's sumptuous repasts on the top of a portmanteau, my native friends remained around the domestic hearth ; the old gentleman, giving much attention to the admiration and polishing of various sword-blades, croned unceasingly an incoherent ditty, whilst the daughter kept industriously tending the fire, and casting furtive glances at the

delicacies served to me. I gave my venerable host a cup of steaming coffee with a dash of brandy, and some picnic biscuits ; this, with a little powdered birdseye tobacco as snuff, wrapped him in an ecstatic state, and he rocked himself to and fro in front of the fire with great satisfaction and perpetual melkums. The fair creature inclined to eau de cologne, marmalade, and sweets generally, and I am sorry, as a veracious chronicler, to be obliged to add that she stole my sugar during the night.

In the morning it was still raining, and nobody seemed inclined to make any effort towards departure. On Barambaras appearing I at once attacked him on the subject of continuing progress, and the absent and missing mules ; and Ahmed on this day surprised me by bearding the Lion of Serramba in a manner I was unprepared for. This unusual carriage might have arisen from remorseful penitence for the previous day's delinquency ; but Barambaras had also grossly insulted him, and his anger overcame his ordinary prudence. It was the desire and aim of Ahmed's life to accommodate events and individuals to his private interests without superfluous delicacy as to the means he employ-

ed to accomplish this required object ; doubts as to the most effectual means of furthering his views occasionally caused him to waver from one side to the other, whilst a frequent wish to conciliate both parties also perplexed him. How might he be apparently zealous in my cause, though friendly to Barambaras ; how faithful to the Prophet, yet ostensibly a Coptic Christian to the Abyssinians ? In fact, he strove with Paul to be all things to all men, and the constant strain placed upon an astuteness which he considerably over-rated, and was perpetually confusing with fluid aids, rendered him often irritable and dogged.

On this occasion, when he complained for me that nine animals were wanting, amongst them the one he usually rode, selected for its strength—and it required a powerful beast to carry the burly dragoman—Barambaras sarcastically inquired if he were a soldier, and on his replying that he was so, the “key” rejoined, “I always supposed that a soldier’s first charge was his mount ; why then did you not take care of your own mule ?” It was undoubtedly aggravating, after a man’s mule had been forcibly taken from him and himself imprisoned, to be asked such a question,

and Ahmed's indignation was aroused. Moreover, he had considered himself on personally friendly terms with the chief, and, whenever I had spoken to him with reference to the changeableness of purpose evinced by Barambaras, had invariably replied that it was equally impossible to account for the inscrutable designs of *ces hauts personnages* as for those of Providence. It was therefore doubly bitter when his convive of yesterday rebuffed him in this brutal manner to-day, and direct personal acquaintance was forced on him of that deep and inscrutable conduct of affairs which he had formerly regarded with such sincere admiration.

We got ready slowly, my guardian venting occasional impertinences. He particularly asked me if I considered the coat (an ordinary morning one) I then wore suitable to my years and position, adding that he looked upon it as unbecoming and indelicate, and that it should be at least two feet longer. On my drawing attention to the wounded and feeble state of the mules, Chelga's chief said that I should find them quite strong enough for the distance I should journey.

At length, having left all save absolute neces-

saries in the charge of Daiossa Alulu, we descended the hill and proceeded in the direction of Barambaras' confines. When within half a mile of the stream which bounded his jurisdiction, he halted, and from an adjacent village four more of my mules were led forth. I was delighted to find that they were in rather better condition than the others. Information was given me that from this point I might proceed under the charge of certain of the Governor of Dembea's men who had arrived to form my escort, it not being the chieftain's intention to accompany me any farther. All disguise respecting the worthy gentleman from Tigré was abandoned, and it now appeared he was a royal tax-gatherer sent on financial matters having reference entirely to Barambaras, and had not the slightest intention of travelling with me to the king, nor, as he kept carefully out of the way, it seemed of returning Mahomed's umbrella.

My host of Serramba had dismounted, and was reclining under a tree at some distance on my left, his followers forming a large semi-circle around him. I imagine it was his intention that I should approach through the centre of the open space and be received by him in a sort of

state ; as, however, he was still in a very inebriated condition, and I thought it quite possible might attempt further insults, I waved an adieu, and quietly proceeded on my road, thankful that I was about to undergo a change of custody, and looking forward with pleasure to the genial and plausible if rather insincere Bizat Bey.

Crossing the stream, and ascending its white, chalky banks, I became conscious on the far side of the presence of the Betwiddet, who was sitting on the ground with two attendants ; but his gay manner had flown, and his position and countenance both betrayed marks of weariness and discomposure. He greeted me with a subdued air, mentioned his excessive delight at meeting an old friend, but was reserved in bearing and deficient in his ordinary fluency, and was, I think, a little doubtful of my reception after his treacherous revelation to Barambaras of my confidence to him. In a sad voice he commenced a pitiful tale of the privation he had undergone in waiting for me three days exposed to the rain, without shelter or food, having expected my arrival for that period. I explained that Barambaras had delayed my departure, and that my late appearance was due to no fault of mine. I pro-

duced a tin of biscuits and some vermouth, the only European fluid I possessed, and in a short time he recovered partially his tone and usually happy frame of mind sufficiently to pour a flood of grievances into my ears.

Barambaras, he said, by the aid of intrigues, had succeeded in quite subordinating him, and under pretext of quelling the insurrection in Dagossa had received royal permission to take from him all his best soldiers. In addition to this, taxation was heavy, and he was poor, oh so poor! Abyssinia was no longer a country for him, he had made up his mind to accompany me back to England, and spend the remainder of his years in a new land.

By this time I had begun to understand that my friend's fluent conversation was not to be received in every detail with unbounded confidence; so at this point I asked him why, if he was so indifferently disposed to the Governor of Chelga he had thought it necessary to relate to him my remarks on Serramba and its master.

On this he became a picture of desolation; he raised his arms above his head, and his face worked with indignant emotion. "What must I think of him?—what could be my opinion?"

But it unhappily was so, he felt bound to confess, with Abyssinian nature, it was deceitful, and not always to be relied on. Would I tell him was the Englishman invariably truthful? He believed he was, but should like my assurance on this point.

Perfect simplicity of manner was the Betwiddet's greatest charm, and this query was persuasively put to me with the questioning innocence of a boy rather than with the wiliness of full sixty years of experience, and, I fancy, a good natural stock of innate subtlety.

I laughed, and then the absurdity of everything generated in him a spasm of mirth, which, commencing in his saddle, literally rocked his body in its gradual passage upward to vocal development, and two little moistening drops in either eye attested to the pungency of the joke. He then insisted on my acceptance of a small rhinoceros-hide whip. "I had nothing where-with to urge my mule. It was true the gift was insignificant, and utterly unworthy my reception, but it was not always by the magnitude of a present that friendship should be measured, and he was poor—oh, so poor!"

I inquired after his son, and expressed ad-

miration of the handsome mule he had ridden on my last visit.

“Why do I see you mounted on a mule fit only to carry a servant?” cried he—“utterly unworthy of a person in your condition?”

I knew that his son was anxious to sell the one I had mentioned, so I replied shortly that travellers' mules were matters of chance, and referred also to the shabby treatment they had received at his neighbour's hands. He shook his head long and slowly, obviously too much overcome with his neighbour's sinfulness to trust his opinion to words. I mentioned that four of my mules had appeared from a village lying in *his* jurisdiction—*he* could not possibly have employed them for his own purposes during my confinement?

“Oh, no. You have, of course, reason to doubt me, but your suspicions are immeasurably painful. God will punish me, so do you leave me alone; let us forget all unpleasantness. Everything I have is at your disposal, but I am poor—very poor.”

During the dialogue, we had been gradually ascending and passing over similar country in the province of Dembea to that previously de-

scribed ; but I was surprised when, at about five p.m., on arriving at a village bordered by some large handsome trees, Bizat Bey announced it as the end of our day's march. I had wished, considering the hasty circumstances of our journey, to continue until sunset, but I learnt on this occasion that travelling with an escort required provision to be made for their wants, and on this account villages of a certain size had to be selected in order to supply their daily bread.

The Betwiddet bivouacked under a large tree, between which and the village—Deraski—the mules were tethered in an open space. A house was allotted to me, in which I prepared for dinner, but I again found it tenanted by a lady and her child, whilst bread and beer-making was conducted by her with the aid of a furnace, which distributed an unbearable heat, and I mentally determined on an open-air dormitory. The room was filled with big vats containing native beer, and I was obviously occupying the village brewery.

I had hardly commenced my dinner, when my attention was attracted by whispering outside my hut, and suddenly, through a crevice in

the thatch, I was made conscious of the presence of a dozen of laughing women, who commenced jabbering and shrieking in tones more powerful than melodious. On my rushing to the door, they all fled in wild confusion, chattering and screaming, and running in the direction of their various houses.

Rather later, I arranged my bed in the neighbourhood of the Governor, but in ten minutes a deluge of rain forced me to retire to the hut, where for the rest of the night I remained.

CHAPTER VII.

Mule-loading—Beauty of the Landscape—Plains of Dembea
—Dêk—Ras Areya—Frangar—The Betwiddet at Home
—Domestic Surroundings—Cathedral of Frangar—
Religious Customs.

AT seven next morning men were told off by the Betwiddet to load the mules, which was effected by this means in an orderly and expeditious manner, although they became daily more troublesome, the sore state of their backs causing them to adopt vigorous measures to prevent the imposition of their burdens; and as soon as they were laden, they would jump away, kicking so violently as to successfully remove the objectionable encumbrances, which had, of course, to be re-adjusted. The native system of fastening with narrow strips of hide was very faulty and inadequate to preserve the burdens in position, especially the cases containing pres-

ents for the king, which were long and square, consequently the thongs were drawn so tightly as to nearly cut the poor animals in two, which they naturally resented.

Quitting the village of Deraski at 7.30, the morning being fresh and fine, we rode across a long flat table-land on the crest of some undulating, grassy hills, a deep valley running at our left hand, and mountains rising in a loftier range on our right. After proceeding in a southeasterly direction for about two hours, we suddenly diverged to the right, and commenced a rapid descent, an extended view, with many varied features of landscape beauty, being unfolded to our sight. At our feet were once more the flat grass plains of Dembea, their monotonous level relieved by houses, villages, and trees, scattered about at distant intervals; and especially conspicuous among the former were numerous grove-girt monasteries and churches. On the right the great Lake Tzana sparkled, calm, clear, and motionless, the rocky islands in its midst and distant surrounding eminences looming dimly in the morning haze. Frangar lay below us on a depressed tongue of land running out into the lower ground, where,

at about two miles' distance, a solitary tree indicated the market-place of Dembea, and the occasional flash of a winding stream tracked the wandering course of the largest river of this portion of Abyssinia, the Mogetsch. Endless mountain chains, the highlands of Woggera, Bellesa, and Begumder, blue and many-peaked, rose in rugged and confused masses on the horizon, encircling the plains, and towering wave-like around us.

The Governor was a perfect guide, and seemed never more happy than when displaying a knowledge of his fatherland. "The wide tract which was spread beneath me," he said, "had been the scene of many of the brightest and many of the bloodiest pages of Abyssinian history.

"Frangar had been formerly selected as the abode of the kings of the country; the shores of the lake were then covered with the many residences of the nobility, the plains burdened with villages, thriving and populous, and the inland sea enlivened by the numerous trading craft uniting the islands and opposite shores. Unhappily, long periods of chronic civil war had deluged the land with blood, devastated the country, and mowed down the people, until it

had become what I now saw it—a bare, uncultivated, and sparsely inhabited tract of earth. The richest province of the kingdom, it was formerly designated the granary of Amhara. The island of Mitraha, from its favourable position, cut off from the mainland, but easily accessible, had been in past times used as a depository for state records, and had also often afforded temporary refuge to vanquished combatants. Dêk was one of the spots selected as an enforced place of exile for members of the royal family, and, after the final defeat of mosaic pretensions to the throne, for many illustrious Jewish prisoners.”

On all such topics the worthy gentleman was inexhaustible, and, pleased to have a willing auditor, he rambled on, turning aside in his discourse occasionally to inquire if such and such events were paralleled by similar incidents in European lands. Then he would branch off into laudation of the materials composing my clothes, and want to know how such manufacturing skill could be attained, gently stroking them down to admire their texture. My dog-skin gloves were special objects of his admiration, and, as I had several pairs, I insisted on his

acceptance of one ; but the Betwiddet was stout, and the gift conferred misery, for his fingers were obviously in a vice, and resembled a fat man in a thin man's clothes.

Frangar was at present the residence of Ras Areya, prime minister to the King, Lord of Dembea, and Governor of Amhara ; descended from Ras Welda Selassy, formerly sovereign of Tigré, he was universally regarded as the monarch's right hand, accompanied him in his warlike expeditions, and regulated the finances of the empire, assisting his royal master with his more mature counsels in peaceful and bellicose matters. The Ras was at this period nearly eighty years of age, but still vigorous and able ; he had passed a life of much vicissitude, including many years of imprisonment at the hands of Theodorus, and in his youth had been celebrated as an astute and daring warrior.

Since my entrance into the country I had found his fame on every tongue, his name invariably mentioned with awe, if not affection ; and this feature was to be remarked in the general demeanour of the people, that whereas Ras Areya was spoken of and regarded as an embodiment of power, in whom each possessed a

natural and individual interest, King Johannes seemed to be viewed as a being separated from them by seclusion, shadowy in his might, and foreign in his person. Although this might have arisen in a measure from proximity, it was a trait which I observed to still exist when at a distance from Dembea, and in the immediate vicinity of the monarch himself.

Sending the loaded mules and domestics a circuit in the direction of the market-place, in company with the Betwiddet and my linguist I rode along the side of the hill slightly above the Ras's house, having in view an invitation to luncheon with my guardian. At the entrance of the court enclosing Ras Areya's dwelling we halted, the Betwiddet making numerous inquiries of the steward as to the preparations made for the great man's reception. The execution of this duty, he informed me, devolved upon him, and as it appeared that the Ras was expected daily, he issued many injunctions to have the several things required, wine, bread, &c., in readiness against that event. This service fulfilled, we rode on, and a little farther came to Bizat Bey's residence, which was situated on the hill, the centre of a group of twelve houses. It

was a dwelling of the usual style of construction, larger than those surrounding it, but with no farther pretensions than extra size to superiority over its neighbours.

On entering he led me by the hand, after bidding me welcome, to a couch at the end, covered with a Turkey carpet; on this he seated me, taking himself the farther portion; my linguists were bestowed on his right, on some fresh straw on the ground, for the couch was the only piece of furniture which the apartment boasted.

The interior, forty feet in diameter, by twenty-five feet high, was commodious, but as usual, owing to an utter absence of window, decidedly sombre; four cedar pillars supported the roof, the beams and ornaments of which were also of this wood, alternated with browned bamboos; on the left-hand side were ranged the owner's stud, two horses and a mule, which turned round to survey us with much placidity, and evidently considered themselves included in any party of pleasure held in that domicile. The centre of the building remained clear, whilst the right-hand portion was partitioned off by split bamboos into several small semi-transparent chambers; these formed the private apartments,

and in one of them I was soon made aware, by whispering and the appearance of a half-concealed form pressed against the interstices with laudable feminine curiosity, that the lady of the household resided.

I could not say that the *tout ensemble* struck me as luxurious, and the matrimonial rooms must have been draughty and dark; the floor was bare, but there were raised boards for bedsteads, and more carpets in the ladies' dormitory. Servants appeared, who handed round water for lavatory purposes preliminary to the repast; soap is not general, and a substitute was provided in a grass with rather rough pods, which, being rubbed between the hands, is certainly cleansing, but rather more aggravating to use than the most latherless, sharp-edged piece of soap. The water was poured over the hands from a clumsily-made pewter vessel, with a long curved spout, like a coffee-pot, which made the process more tedious. This magnificent machine constituted the governor's plate; he was properly proud of it, and received the admiration which I loudly expressed with well-bred humility, as a fitting tribute to its undoubted merits. Bread now appeared and paprika; breaking off, or I should

rather say tearing off, portions of the former, they were held in the fingers, dipped into the fiery-red condiment, and conveyed to the mouth. This was a concession to native custom which, as surely as I made it, caused me excruciating anguish, brought tears into my eyes, and made me feel quite jerky. I was much relieved when a sort of soup, composed of brown water and brown fragments of bread, came on the scene—in fact, a brown bread souchet; in this we fished and drank alternately, and the fact cannot be concealed that, up to this period, I was not enjoying myself. Bowls of milk and native beer were the early beverages, the former being my choice. Things were, however, to improve, and a huge dish of boiled fowl floating in cream followed, side-dishes of Berberer, a really pleasant composition of capsicums, black pepper, salt, and butter as a sauce, small plates of clotted cream to finish with, whilst very excellent old hydromel was produced to aid these good things in their disappearance. I must confess that competition with the Governor in the concealment of fluids was a feat un contemplated by me. I had previously seen his marvellous prowess, and in his person the fabled powers of ancient

Scandinavian warriors were emulated. I shrank from the encounter, and, with a good-tempered laugh, he received my excuses, and accepted my inferiority as a fault of foreign education. I am bound to add that Ahmed and Fadl el Moula made up for my deficiencies; and I may as well state that those excellent Mussulmans had left all religious injunctions forbidding wine behind them in the Soudan, and drank in Abyssinia as much as they could obtain. Ahmed informed me that the prophet referred only to wine made from the grape, and could not possibly intend abstinence from beverages so wholesome as hydromel, of which he had no personal knowledge. Fadl el Moula refrained from casuistry, drank hard during the day, and prayed with much fervour for forgiveness in the evening. I had, however, no dependence on their staying qualities, and when my worthy host personally retired for a minute and returned with a jar of potent native whisky, I trembled for the result on the afternoon march, and awaited further development in an anxious frame of mind. The spirit was excellent, full of flavour, without fire, and beautifully clear; I never tasted better, and felt inclined to believe,

as the genial gentleman assured me, that no amount would intoxicate or give an after-head-ache. I was, however, moderate in its consumption, and tried, as soon as politeness rendered it possible, to induce a continuation of the march.

Previous to departure, I was favoured with a view of the inner apartments and the last wife and child ; the lady was not captivating, and her toilette decidedly of indifferent cleanliness, but this was to be accounted for by domestic cares, as I found her engaged in nursing and imparting maternal refreshment to the small recent male arrival. I exhibited to her admiring gaze two Austrian gold coins which I suggested as earrings ; maternal solicitude sank for a time, subdued by feminine vanity, and baby became a comparatively second-class object ; she beamed with satisfaction and smiles, and concealed them in a mysterious fold of her simple and somewhat scanty attire.

The Betwiddet then indulged in a few minutes' nap, whilst I smoked a cigarette, after which he announced his readiness to proceed, although it was perfectly clear that he would have preferred to retire to sleep. He asked me

if I should like to visit the cathedral church of Frangar, stating that it would not take long and would probably interest me. I acquiesced promptly, and in ten minutes more four big people on four small mules might have been seen ascending some rising ground, the summit of which was crowned by the sacred edifice. Bizat Bey, slightly hilarious, led the way with pleased alacrity, I followed; then came Ahmed, gaily humming a chansonnette in a cracked voice, a happy, vacuous smile playing on his sallow face; the rear was brought up by Fadl el Moula, his ebony countenance glowing with exercise and whisky.

We shortly came in front of a substantial wall, stone built, some twelve feet high, bearing marks of considerable antiquity, crusted with mildew, and covered with moss and creepers; it ran round the entire summit of the hill. Admittance was gained, after a short delay, through a narrow gateway guarded by a strong door surmounted by a turret, in which reposed a bell. Passing this, I found myself in a large open courtyard, containing the church and monastic buildings of Santa Mariam of Frangar.

The church itself was an immense circular erection, surrounded by a lofty exterior gallery some eighteen feet wide and twenty high, very solidly constructed with strong cedar columns, a stone coping running along the basement. The walls of the main edifice were of brick, and large doors gave access to the interior, the centre of which was devoted to a square compartment containing the Holy of Holies; this was stuccoed and adorned by some very rude paintings, many representing fictional episodes in the lives of saints. Undaunted mounted heroes were portrayed spearing spiteful-looking monsters with fiery orbs and long spiral tails; martyrs with upturned eyes were simmering in cauldrons of boiling butter, or hung suspended on every variety of crucifix, whilst a few were devoted to subjects in the life of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. As usual in these coarse Scriptural daubs, flames and tortures figured largely, and I was pleased to observe that the evil one was depicted in sable pigments, and flourished the traditional trident, whilst horns and tail were not forgotten.

Four doors faced to each point of the compass, giving entrance to the more holy interior

portion, into which no admittance was permitted. I was told the special guardian was absent, but have no doubt that, had I been unaccompanied by infidels, I should have been allowed to enter. As it was, I was much surprised that the Mussulmans had been privileged to penetrate even the outer wall.

I was assured by the custodian of the temple, who acted as guide, that artists had at an anterior date been imported from Alexandria by previous Aboonahs to effect the evidently highly esteemed works of art which adorned the walls. Mummies of five ancient sovereigns in excellent preservation stood on either side the northern door; the coffins holding the remains were of unpolished cedar; the embalmed figures themselves resembled exactly similar Egyptian relics, and impressed me with the idea of being of very curtailed dimensions. The roof was a very lofty thatched one, surmounted by a cross. The outbuildings, the residence of the priests attached to the church, were extensive, but poor and unworthy of remark. I presented a donation for the benefit of the building, which was even then undergoing repair. In consideration of the gift, my reverend guide informed me

the prayers of the brotherhood would accompany me to the king, and I then took my departure.

Nothing in Abyssinia is so remarkable to the foreigner as the constant recurrence of churches and religious edifices. Every prominent spot specially favoured by nature is inevitably occupied by a church or monastery, and the burden imposed upon the labouring classes by the countless hives of drones inhabiting these erections must be severe indeed. The exteriors of the sacred edifices are in most cases very poor, and few rival in size and importance that of Frangar; they are but rarely composed of materials of greater durability than wood and thatch, have invariably four doors giving to the four cardinal points, and are surmounted by a cross. Inside they are separated into three divisions, resembling the Jewish temple, the outer, the inner, and the innermost court; these are concentric with the exterior of the church; into the two latter, the Holy and the Holy of Holies, the layman is rarely admitted. The Holy may be penetrated for the administration of the sacrament, but the Holy of Holies contains the ark and the sacred vessels, and is veiled from the

eye and touch of the ordinary unconsecrated mortal. An impure man may not enter a church at all, and all the various causes which render the human being unclean, according to the mosaic law, remain in force to bar his entrance. It may be understood that in the permission given me to pass the sacred threshold transgression had been committed, but I observed that in many instances the letter of the law was not strictly observed.

On entering the church the threshold and doorposts must be kissed, and the shoes removed from the feet. A portion of the service is simple enough, consisting of lessons read in a monotonous nasal voice by an officiating priest, but the language used (the Geez, or ancient classical tongue of Ethiopia) is no better understood by the listeners than the Latin service employed in English Roman Catholic edifices; an effort to introduce which also into Abyssinia was attempted by the Jesuits during their ascendancy. There is, however, another part of the devotional exercises more open to objection, in which dances and gesticulations of the holy men, performed with frantic waving of arms and contortions of the face, and ac-

accompanied by vocal and instrumental discordance, form an entertainment decidedly qualifying for a lunatic asylum. There are no images in their churches, but paintings are general. The erection of a church is a pious duty, which fulfilled secures the benefactor future salvation; hence their exceeding frequency.

Fanaticism and superstition are firmly ingrained in the native mind, and a blind, unreasoning belief in the sacred power of the priesthood prevails in all ranks, from the monarch to the peasant. The dread threat of excommunication is both feared and exercised, and penances of all sorts are enforced upon religious delinquents.

The faith of Abyssinia is a complicated mass of outward observances, fasts, and festivals, a grafting of the Christian belief upon the Mosaic code; and the constantly recurring holy days entail a life of idleness upon the population; for not only is abstinence from food enjoined during fasts, but also a cessation of labour. Six months out of the twelve are thus devoted to laziness and weakening of the muscular system. The title of Aboonah (father) is ac-

corded to the archbishop, who is the head of the Church of Ethiopia. He is nominated by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and possesses absolute spiritual authority; all the minor ecclesiastical dignitaries are appointed by him; the power of consecration and absolution remains in his hands, and in past times his influence in temporal affairs has been general and unlimited. There is however, at the present date, owing to misunderstanding between Abyssinia and Egypt, no resident Aboonah.

The revenues of the church are very large, and each sacred building has its attendant endowment. Presents are made by grateful laymen after propitious events, as thankofferings, and the officiating priests grow fat on native credulity. The universal deference paid to the many sacred representatives, both priests and monks, appeared to me the more strange as it was perfectly obvious that strict morality of life was neither practised by them nor believed in respecting them. A priest may only marry once; disqualification attends a second union. There are religious orders of monks and nuns vowed to chastity, but I think it is doubtful whether any but nominal attention is paid to

the restriction imposed ; and the orders are entered merely that the bread of idleness may be enjoyed.

At each fair spot I passed on the route, under the shade of the stately sycamores, sat or lounged groups of gossiping ecclesiastics, crowned with large white turbans, and carrying brass crucifixes: the props of the Abyssinian faith, a creed which subordinates the moral conduct of life to ceremonial, retains all the hardness and materialism of the Jewish code, and obscures Christianity's happiest teachings—mercy and charity; adding doctrines in their stead which make salvation a purchaseable commodity, and render an honest life a work of supererogation.

Purgatory enters largely into the subtle calculations of the blest men who hold the keys of that unenviable halting-place, as it is a matter of faith that the souls of the deceased undergo a residence the duration and discomfort of which may be alleviated or aggravated, according to the amount of prayer purchased on their behalf by anxious and well-wishing relatives.

The church has always exercised great power

in Abyssinia, and it was through the influence of the Aboonah Tecla Haimanout, in 1268, that the kingly line of Solomon was restored to power; on which occasion royal gratitude decreed the revenues of one third-of the kingdom to be enjoyed in perpetuity for the maintenance of the church.

In less than a thousand years three great religious revolutions swept over the land with the usual accompaniments of misery and bloodshed, and the present faith, established in A.D. 330, has been twice supplanted by temporarily successful rivals, in A.D. 960, after six hundred years of peaceful occupation, by a renewal of Judaism lasting more than a century, and again in A.D. 1600 by Roman Catholicism, spread by the energetic labours of Peter Paez, the Portuguese, who induced Za Denghel to embrace its tenets and proclaim it the national creed, a measure which drew down upon the monarch excommunication by the Aboonah, and in a battle, waged between the rival Christian sects, Za Denghel was defeated and slain.

After a sanguinary struggle of thirty years, in 1632 the ancient faith once more rose triumphant under Facilidas, and has remained uninter-

ruptedly since that re-installation, the national religion. There have been periods, however, for instance at the commencement of the sixteenth century, when the triumphant inroads of Islamism have also threatened not only the temporal but the spiritual power of the kingdom, and the adhesion of the neighbouring tribes to the crescent has presented a proximate source of peril to the preachers of the Cross. Abyssinia has undoubtedly suffered much in the cause of religious belief, and, bearing this in mind, it is not wonderful that so great prominence is given to spiritual matters, and so much pride taken in their Christian denomination.

The baptism of male children takes place forty days after birth, that of females in eighty days. There is an annual purification of adults, and if from any cause the rite of baptism has not been administered in early years, it can be undergone at any subsequent period; extreme poverty has been sometimes assigned to me for the absence of the cord or mateb, without which nobody can be really said in Abyssinia to be respectable. An unbaptized person cannot be saved.

Marriage in Abyssinia is a ceremony occasion-

ally sanctified by the blessing of the church, and is, in such cases, binding on both parties ; but such unions are rare, and popular taste has declared itself in favour of more transient domestic arrangements.

Mourning for deceased relatives is accompanied by much external evidence of grief, and loud weeping and lamentation is given vent to by the women ; funeral feasts are prepared, and much money bestowed in mitigating the passage through purgatory of the departed, materially benefiting the stomachs and purses of the hungry priesthood.

The adoration of the Virgin Mary occupies a conspicuous place in native devotions, and prayers for the intercession of the saints are enjoined and practised. In addition to Biblical, there are properly canonized Abyssinian saints. The Sabbath is the Jewish one, and is observed on the last day of the week.

CHAPTER VIII.

Goramba—Market-place of Dembea—Nocturnal Companion—Abyssinian Custom—A Present—More Delay—Breakfast at Goramba—The Mogetsch—Another Stoppage—Coursing—The Cherry-tree—More Vexation—Travellers—News of the King—The Lake—Defile of Begumder.

A SHARP descent brought us to the plains again, and, taking a south-westerly direction across the market-place of Dembea, an uneventful ride, after crossing a stream which, though looking narrow and insignificant, proved to be both deep and difficult, owing to the steepness of its banks, placed us in the district of Goramba, in the principal village of which we were to pass the night. The district consisted of three villages, detached by short intervals from each other, situated at a small distance from the lake, and about six miles south-west of Frangar.

The curing of hides was extensively carried on in this and the adjoining villages, and a general air of prosperity distinguished them. The market of Dembea was held twice a week, but was considered much inferior in importance to the more distant one of Chelga. These market-places are mere rendezvous for business, and contain no buildings or sheds of any description to afford shelter to either man or beast, should the weather be tempestuous.

On arriving at our destined halting-place, I found that the houses composing it were entirely surrounded by a strong high reed fence. We entered through a tall, narrow wooden gateway at the northern end from which a straight road led directly to a similar means of ingress at the southern extremity. This was the main street. The village was large and orderly, and presented an appearance of superior cleanliness to any which I had yet seen.

I was delighted to find that a hut of a most promising exterior awaited me, entirely denuded of inhabitants, and to this Bizat Bey led the way, with conscious pride at the comfortable quarters provided. He and his retinue were accommodated in a house immediately opposite, a

capital hut was found for the interpreters, and another was ready for my servants.

Looking forward to a pleasant night's rest, and remembering the favourable nature of the neighbourhood, I had no sooner made the necessary preparations for future comfort than I determined to visit the banks of the Mogetsch, which ran past the village, in search of that rare treat a bath, to be followed by a subsequent stalk for duck, and was rewarded by excellent sport. Curious natives followed me about, whom the idea of shooting birds flying pleased immensely, and right and left shots were received with enthusiasm.

On my return to my hut the appearance of a grey steed tethered at the farther end, his hind quarters in dangerous proximity to my bed, rather surprised me. I was, I confess, at a loss to understand his presence, but imagined it must be a favourite animal, the property of the owner of the dwelling, who, not wishing it to be exposed to the night, had considered that there was plenty of room in the house for the pair of us.

The real state of affairs which I afterwards learnt to understand was this. It was a compliment. The Abyssinian, like the Arab warrior,

is never supposed to endure separation from his steed, night and day it must be his faithful friend and invariable companion. It was felt that my establishment without a horse was incomplete, hence the equine sharer of my apartment. It was a custom I subsequently noticed religiously observed by Ras Areya, and by that warlike monarch Johannes II.

Before turning in for the evening I paid a visit to the Betwiddet, and, with the view of enlisting his sympathies, I determined to follow the invariable native custom of making him a present. I previously sent my interpreters to mention that I desired a short private interview, a most necessary precaution, for custom in Abyssinia surrounds every man of any position with omnipresent retainers, who court his favour during prosperity by outward servility with the hope of future benefit to themselves, and also treasure in their minds his every action, to be retailed, in case of rupture with their present, to a future patron, desirous of employing such knowledge to the former's disadvantage. On all occasions, on entering a native official's dwelling, it is usual to find the apartment occupied by at least half a dozen members of his retinue, who evince not

the slightest intention to quit on the arrival of a new-comer, but squat listlessly about with a languid interest in his business, which, however flattering, is not without its possible discomfort; and although the bestowal of presents is universal throughout the kingdom, it may be always possible to depict the acceptance of a gift by those in high places as having been repaid by an equivalent service rendered at the expense of their official responsibilities.

On one occasion a scene which I would willingly have avoided, but which was not without amusing features, occurred to me *àpropos* of these very necessary preliminary warnings. It was my desire to make a gift to a very high official, and I sent accordingly to seek a private audience for the purpose: the arrangement was badly handled, and when I arrived several persons were present. After a few light topics had been discussed I mentioned my object in paying the visit, and, as no offer was made to dismiss the bystanders, exhibited my donation. In an instant I was aware I had made a false step, a frown of mingled surprise and indignation clouded the hitherto serene brow, and tones of fathomless integrity declined the proffered

gift, whilst strong inward feeling found vent in a rocking motion of his body.

"You have utterly misunderstood me," said he. "The friendliness I have shown you has been extended solely with pure motives of kindness to the stranger in the land. Devotion to my sovereign and country is amply repaid by the internal consciousness of rectitude. Your intentions are doubtless well meant, but greater happiness will await me from the knowledge that you will now recognize how disinterested my conduct has been."

My offering was firmly waved away, and for some period his frame continued shaken by inward emotion, to the great edification of the surrounding retainers, whose eyes remained fixed on the ground. It was undoubtedly very discomfiting, and my apologies for so great a mistake were profuse. I declared that I could not quit his abode until restored calmness had given me the assurance that his feelings had recovered their usual serene tone; and as this fortunately soon happened, I retired, properly enraged at the miserable management which had caused the *contretemps*. I naturally consulted a native authority, who had witnessed

A VISIT TO ABYSSINIA.

the ~~possibility~~ of the mistake I had committed, but he was so misled by the circumstances that I remained from him for some time little but laughter. His eventual view of matters was summed in few words.

"Try again: but take more, and have no witnesses."

On the present occasion I found the governor alone, and when I opened the subject on which my visit was founded his eyes twinkled, and said he.

"From the first moment I saw you I had a presentiment that we were ordained to be great friends. I do not know if Europeans have these superstitions, but with us they are general, and we do not find them deceptive. You may have heard—and I am aware it is generally stated of us by foreigners—that we are deceitful and avaricious. Do not believe this; all countries contain bad men, and your experience has perhaps been unfortunate. But we shall remain always friends—and what are presents after all but external emblems of esteem?"

There were no difficulties on this occasion. He was obviously much pleased, and finally said

that the blessing of Providence would be sure to attend the exertions of a man who was thoughtful of the saddened circumstances of others; and he was poor, very poor.

On the morning of the 19th I arose freshened, and feeling that, as we were out of the hands of Barambaras, all would go well; I determined to start the mule-loading at once, and, whilst this was going forward, take my gun and shoot a few wild-fowl, as I might not find another similar chance. I therefore told Baldo Mariam and my servants to commence the work at once, and started myself for the Mogetsch.

I had been away about half an hour, when I looked back towards the village to note signs of progress. To my astonishment no activity was visible; nobody was in motion, and the mules were quietly browsing about in lazy, undisturbed contentment. Thinking at once that, possibly owing to my absence, they were taking matters easily, I hurried back, and encountered the Betwiddet at the door of his house, whilst all his men, who usually assisted in packing, were dispersed about, holding counsel amongst themselves in knots; but no mules, and no preparations heralded departure. I

appealed to Bizat Bey therefore to know whether this was the manner in which to reach Debra Tabor in time; for I must here mention that I had been informed it was the king's intention to leave for Gojam in a few days.

"It was most unfortunate," said that worthy; "certain of the mules had strayed off during the night, and the men of the village absolutely refused to go in search of them; his own men were tired from yesterday, and in fact it was not their affair. It would perhaps be better to wait until the afternoon."

I said that in my case waiting meant being late; that he as governor of the province must be sufficiently powerful to compel the head of the village to send a few men to gather the mules together; when, if his people were too tired, I and my domestics would manage to load the animals. I was undoubtedly energetic in my language, but it had favourable effects; and, after some time, the mules commenced coming in, and I at once set everybody at work to get up the baggage.

From this moment, however, I saw that there was no genuine desire on the part of the old

gentleman to aid me in a speedy passage, and, although I could not at this time understand why it should be so, or imagine any reason for such conduct, I could not blind myself to the fact that it was so. Debra Tabor was on everybody's lips, but always with a satirical emphasis, and they worked like men who are acting a farce: the old gentleman holding aloof, exercising no pressure, and concealing himself.

Now, as I had only on the preceding evening, in order to mark my sense of his past courtesy and facilitate future movements, made the present mentioned shortly before, it caused his behaviour to be all the more unaccountable, and the unpleasant suspicion began to obtrude itself that, having obtained all he could anticipate, my aged friend was about to leave me to shift for myself; but Baldo Mariam came well to the front, my servants were anxious to get on, and, spite of lukewarmness and but little aid from the men of Dembea, the mules were laden and saddled by 10 a.m.

My interpreters behaved mysteriously, counselling compliance with the Betwiddet's wishes for delay without assigning a sufficient reason;

and I had long felt that no real assistance would come from them, as they invariably fell under the influence and intimidation of any Abyssinian possessed of power with whom our fortunes became involved.

At length all was ready, and I mounted, feeling pleased to think that we were on the march again. At the gate I waited, expecting the appearance of my host, and, after some delay, feeling impatient, went in search of him. I found him calmly sitting on the ground in front of a house, looking weary and undecided. At once, on seeing me, he burst into ecstasies.

"How pleasant it is that you have come! I am about to breakfast, and you will now stay and share my frugal repast with me."

All idea of commencing the day's march seemed to have vanished from his mind once more, and he avoided reference to the subject. So I replied,

"But our journey, and the mules?"

"Oh, let them go on; we shall be shortly able to overtake them."

There was reason in this, as, of course, baggage mules travel more slowly than mounted ones; so, sending on the servants and mules

with an escort, I joined the Betwiddet at his breakfast.

We entered one of the large ordinary huts, he and I occupying a raised seat at the end, whilst the interpreters squatted on the right, and about fifty or sixty people, standing about inside, crowded the apartment in a circle around us. It was dark, hot, and stuffy.

The breakfast was simple—brown bread, honey, milk, red pepper, and native beer—the most noteworthy incident being the manner in which the Governor quaffed the latter beverage, a performance approaching the superhuman. In huge drinking-cups formed from the largest buffalo horns, holding a quart and a half, he repeatedly buried the greater portion of his convivial countenance. Three times did I see that cup fully replenished, and on each occasion the disappearance of its contents with certainty preceded the re-appearance of his face beaming with the consciousness of a good action. But the quantity consumed in no way embarrassed the worthy gentleman, who seemed seriously concerned with my mean and inferior performances. Always a genial host, he pressed upon me the soft bread and the fiery pepper, tearing

off large pieces, with which he insisted on feeding me himself, and my polite endeavours to please him by swallowing them, lit a furnace in my mouth and drew tears from my eyes. Well did I know that no residence in the country, however lengthened, could ever accustom me to that spongy bread, blazing chili, and acid beer, and, at the risk of falling still lower in the estimation of all, I quaffed a big gourd full of milk, in that manner temporarily relieving the burning torture of my throat. Apart also from distaste to the diet, I had already breakfasted, and was anxious to move forward on the day's march.

Noticing my impatience, my host signified his acquiescence, and, rising from the couch, he guided his portly figure in the direction of the mules. It was now, however, eleven a.m., and the best part of the day was gone, which to a man fighting for hours was sufficiently aggravating.

We started from Goramba in a south-easterly direction, and, passing almost at once a church on our left, held our course towards the Mogetsch. Bizat Bey, inclined to be gay after his breakfast, and drawing my attention to the

sacred building, insisted on my saluting it, a request I found no difficulty in complying with. I was amused when, on my subsequently sneezing, he promptly turned round and wished me long life, the similarity to the custom in many European countries instantly striking me.

"Marool!" (bless you) cried he, "it is not such a great distance to Debra Tabor, after all, and is but a matter of a few days. You will easily arrive there, and need not hurry."

I pointed out to him that, if I reached that town after the king's departure, I might almost as well not arrive at all, a stern chase to Gojam being a far more extended journey than that to Debra Tabor.

The river was soon reached. It is at this spot of inconsiderable breadth, and runs between high mud banks, the descent of which was not unattended with difficulty, especially as, on arriving at the stream, the bottom proved to be particularly soft and unsound, and the current swift and strong.

On attaining the far side the governor dismounted, and I then, to my great disgust, perceived the baggage mules still in our rear, having made a detour of sufficient length, combined with

a halt concealed by a clump of trees, to keep them well behind us. It was clearly not the intention to press on quickly. We had, in the first place, to await their arrival; this, of course, entailed dismounting; half an hour was consumed in getting them across amidst a great deal of floundering and splashing, some of them slipping up on the banks, others losing their footing in the passage, whilst three or four elected to drink, and a vexatious few bucked their loads off into the stream, or commenced rolling with their packs in the water. After all had reached the opposite side, and were once more in motion, it then was a further matter of difficulty to get the Betwiddet into action again, for, having once sat down, he was most obviously indisposed to disturb his portly person, and this was the manner in which I observed his vast potations told upon him.

The country here was very level, and broken only by thickets and small hillocks. At a short distance from the river stood the remains of an ancient brick-built monastery, moss and creeper-clad, and farther on a small village was reached, beyond which again the level ground was slightly varied by high reeds and small bushes.

Here, to my annoyance, my fickle host announced his intention of coursing with some greyhounds which he had with him, and a small antelope which bounded past was greeted by him with a delighted cry. Off went the hounds, and off went the Betwiddet. They disappeared behind some bushes, and I found myself left alone, wondering what it all meant, for it became obvious that every opportunity was made to deter and not to accelerate my advance. I collected the escort and mules together, but was told no farther movement could take place until the governor's return. In the meantime a large tree which overhung our path, producing a poor sort of cherry, afforded amusement to certain of the party, who commenced climbing its branches in search of the fruit, until, one adventurous individual stretching out on an unsound limb, it gave way with a loud snap and the unfortunate man fell with a heavy thud on the ground at my feet; he appeared much hurt and I feared internal injury, for all our endeavours to assist him to rise were unavailing, and I awaited with increased anxiety the arrival of his master, as it was obvious no action would be taken until that event.

At length I saw him ambling gently along the narrow path, looking as unconcerned as conscious iniquity permitted. On seeing the man lying on the ground, and being acquainted with the reason, he decided that he should be conveyed to the village, to which, turning to me, he said he thought we had all better return and rest, adding, "It was late, this was the last village we should find for a very great distance; it was going to rain, if we went farther there would be no food for the men that night, and they would be discontented. Yes, it would be decidedly advisable to halt, and go on next morning."

This was too much, the sun was high in the heavens, it was a beautiful day, and we had barely covered a few miles since our departure, added to which the village in which he proposed to remain consisted of six miserable huts only, filthily dirty. I refused point-blank. I said that if, as was evident, he was disinclined to proceed, I must ask his permission to continue the march by myself, but that such unnecessary delay as he now proposed would never be consented to by me. My interpreter remonstrated

for him, but I moved off, and grunting dissent, the wicked governor slowly followed.

I now marched resolutely forward in advance, determined to give no farther heed to obstructions, and plunged into a wood of small trees through which the path led. After threading a devious way through this, crossing a dried-up watercourse, and passing two curious isolated mounts, crowned with inevitable churches, we turned to the right, and shortly emerged on the shores of the great lake. Here, to my delight, we met men arriving from the king's army and heralding the approach of Ras Areya, who they stated would certainly reach Dembea in the course of two days.

They volunteered the information that Johannes expected us, that we ought to travel as rapidly as possible, or should most certainly not reach Debra Tabor before his departure. This was decisive, and nothing more was at present urged to prevent our advance. We were now on the highway, and the struggle at the small village had been the turning-point on which victory depended. If Ras Areya was on his way to Frangar, the farther from his home and the nearer to Debra Tabor my meeting with him

took place, obviously the less chance there was of my being turned back and dealt with by him, in place of reaching the king, which, it seemed to me, was the object sought to be attained. The governor, however, travelled in silence, and was sulky, and placed the greatest possible distance between himself and me.

After following the border of the lake for a short distance, the road turned off again to the left through small wooded tracts similar to those we had lately quitted, and we crossed another waterless river-bed, then ascending some gradually rising ground, came in front of the mountains of Begumder, which here edge down to the lake opposite the isle of Mitraha, and the entrance to the province was made through a narrow defile about twenty yards wide, mountains rising on both sides; on the right hand, perched at a sufficient elevation to command a view of all travellers arriving from either direction, a small sentry shed with two occupants projected, the representatives of the Customs of Begumder.

CHAPTER IX.

The High-road—Camp Followers—Wounded—Approach of the Ras—Emfras—Tents—Curious Birds—Bivouac—Watchfulness—The Betwiddet Bizat Bey leaves me—His Legacy—Lamgué—Lake deserted—Scenery—Foggora—Dara—The Road—Batah—Faag—The Reb—Bridge—Facilidas—The Ras's Son—A Prisoner—Amoora Gedal.

WE were now on a main highway of the country, for at the entrance to the defile a road on our left arrived direct from Gondar, whilst along the lake lay the most frequented route to the provinces north and west of Lake Tzana. The way was enlivened by numerous travellers of all descriptions, and afforded a pleasing contrast to the unfrequented bye-routes by which we had been previously guided: soldiers on foot carrying spears, officers armed with swords on horseback, mounted officials with large retinues mostly pedestrain, others

with two or three followers, vivandières, beggars, and every sort of camp-follower, priests with huge white turbans and crucifixes, all passed by in turns, and cripples, with every description of deformity and disfiguring ailment, lined the road and besought alms. I noticed that many of the warriors, returning to their various homes, quitted to follow Johannes to the battle-field, were bearing back very ugly wounds inflicted by the blunt and clumsy weapons wielded by their foes. Everybody having authority urged on me speed and diligence, stating that I had been expected for days, and that the king had appointed to leave for Gojam the day after the morrow. Shortly after, some men passed carrying portions of Ras Areya's bedstead, a massive construction of cedar adorned with thick pewter ornaments, one of the only articles of pretentious furniture I saw during my stay in the country. This looked indeed like a near approach, and I hastened on.

The mountains, especially on the right hand of the Pass, were well wooded, and the low land of the island of Mitraha presented a mass of heavy foliage rising from the bosom of the lake, its church showing out obscurely from its midst.

On emerging from the defile, the mountains on the left receded in a semi-circle, closing in again at a short distance in our front. We were now traversing the district of Emfras, the principal industry of which is tent-making, and several tent villages were scattered about the plain. The inhabitants of these easily moved abodes shift their site as fancy dictates, but remain in a circuit defined by custom. The tents in use are composed of thick black cloth, tolerably waterproof, and triangular in shape; they are supported by two upright and one connecting pole, are pegged from their lower edges to the ground, but have no guy ropes, and their ordinary length is about eight feet, width six feet, and centre height six feet. They are, however, made in all sizes for sale, and the larger sorts are often constructed in partitions capable of being joined at the will of the owner.

Hardly was the Custom-house passed when I became sensible of the presence of Bizat Bey once more; he merely mentioned that his territory had ceased, that he had previously warned the Governor of Begumder of our intended arrival, but that up to the present time no answer had been returned, and

that he feared he was absent in attendance on the king; if, therefore, I was determined to proceed, he would stretch his duty so much as to accompany me as far as Lamgué, but that the approach of Ras Areya made his presence in Frangar a necessity, and that he was a poor old man and very tired. This was slightly apologetic, and I saw that the gentleman, deceitful on most subjects, was certainly truthful on this occasion, so I replied that I hoped he would go on until dusk, when we would arrange about our farther movements. The road was fortunately a very good and even one, being well marked by much traffic, and we proceeded at our best pace; this, however, with laden mules can rarely exceed three miles an hour.

About five p.m. I was perplexed with a sight which caused me to doubt the reliability of my vision, and for a time I felt I must be labouring under a delusion. Floating before me in the air were birds—not, however, ordinary birds, but birds performing their flight with four visible wings, two in the ordinary position, but two also placed above those, and connected with them by a thin ligament, which followed exactly the motion of the lower ones. Steady investigation,

however, proved that my eyes were not in fault, and I have since heard that in central Africa these four-winged birds, or bats, are not uncommon. Their flight was not rapid, but wavering and bat-like. The little slave-boy, Hassan, evinced no surprise, and informed me that he had seen similar specimens in his native land.

Whilst pondering over these aerial visitors, I had fallen slightly to the rear, and now found myself at the edge of a small rivulet, accompanied only by Mahomed. After crossing this, the path veered off slightly to the left, and I suddenly made the unpleasant discovery that it was growing dusk, and that I had lost sight of the remainder of our party. However, I knew that they must be in front, so trotted on, and, after a short search, discovered that they had come to a halt a quarter of a mile to the left of the road, and were preparing for the night's quarters. The Governor was absolutely knocked up, and told me in quavering tones that all his men had left to either return to Frangar or seek refreshment.

The camping-ground was well chosen, flat, and bounded by a small stream on one side; hills rose on the left hand, and hills again were

dimly visible on our front. We formed a circle close around the mules, which were unladen, and, being first all joined together by the long leathern baggage-strings, were at different points prevented from roaming by pegs driven into the ground. From the appearance of large bundles of hay, which I noticed satisfying the mules' appetites in about an hour, I saw that the Governor's men had not really gone very far, as it was evident these must have been collected by them from neighbouring houses, and although it was too dark to distinguish any habitations, I could distinctly hear an occasional barking from wide-awake watch-dogs.

Our halting-place, situated on the plains of Lamgué, which stretched away on our right to the lake, boasted a small mound, and this was at once appropriated by Mahomed as the kitchen, a protection for the fire being necessary from the wind, which commenced to blow lightly across our bivouac with a bitter cold air. I was, however, much disgusted on discovering that all the wild duck, save one, had been consumed, in Mahomed's jealous fears lest they might spoil. Life was at this time generally recruited by fowls, for I had found the meat so indifferent

as to be almost uneatable ; the beef was musky, the mutton lean ; it was difficult to keep either sufficiently long to become tender, and the domestic bird was therefore an inevitable daily necessity. Any departure from the monotonous repetition of chickens was of course approved of by my domestics as well as by myself, and the wild duck of Goramba had pleased the palates of the children of the Soudan.

Our beds were of course on the ground, but, as I observed that the Governor was without that luxury, and had no aids to comfort, I now held out the olive branch by sending him my two candle-lamps, and arranging screens to protect them from the wind, formed by some mule-pads, which answered the purpose moderately well. European preserved viands he received with pleasure, but was prevented by religious scruples from consuming anything which had been killed by or passed through the hands of a Mussulman.

The pleasure of my evening meal was somewhat destroyed by the wind, which was very fresh, and puffs of which extinguished my lanterns, suffering sadly from an absence of glass. I, however, mentally resolved that there was no

sleep for me, as I intended to keep watch all night to prevent any possible treachery; for it was perfectly easy for any ill-intentioned individual to stop me very effectually from farther progress by setting loose the mules during the night, and driving them off in various directions. Even if eventually recovered, which would be improbable, the mischief caused by the delay would be irreparable. I had no fear of being prevented by violence from going forward, but I was convinced that it was necessary to maintain a constant vigilance against the subtle tricks in which the Abyssinian is an adept.

It was a long and weary night. The mules were restless, and I constantly imagined I detected stealthy forms sneaking amongst them; and when two or three, becoming entangled with each other, kicked and plunged in efforts to get free, I made sure that mischief was afoot. Twice I saw the envoy leave his straw-bed and wander off in the gloom, coming, after a long detour, past my resting-place and scanning me narrowly. This was the man I most suspected, and I allowed him to see that I was vigilant and wakeful. Then men came straggling in, having been in quest of food, and, lying down

to take a short rest, selected positions in the vicinity of the mules' packs, or behind the mules, these affording them a slight shelter from the chilly wind; the animals were of course disturbed on each occasion and made uneasy. The night overhead was moderately fine, but smoke-coloured clouds were flying about, obscuring the blue sky and constantly concealing the stars, disputing with them prominence of position in the heavens; dogs barked distantly, keeping nocturnal watch; hyænas howled angrily in answer, and, thoroughly tired out, I found great difficulty in resisting sleep. Altogether, I was not sorry when early dawn gave me an excuse to rise, and replace by the day's activity the more wearying vigil of the night.

The Betwiddet, who bore signs of undoubted fatigue, at once, on rising, acquainted me with his determination to immediately return to Frangar, but he said, as nothing had been arranged by the Governor of Begumder for my farther progress, it was his intention to give me six of his own men, appointing one as a leader; they were all trustworthy servants, would see after the mules, guide me on the road, and follow me to the king; when I again saw him, he

should ask me for an account of their conduct, which he was sure would be a favourable one.

Of these men I may here mention that they remained with me until my return to Frangar; were unvaryingly attentive and diligent; saved me all the personal trouble I had previously undergone in taking direction of the loading and unloading of the mules; and the leader I found perpetually near me, having obviously constituted himself my body-guard.

After an affectionate farewell with the Betwiddet—for with all his insincerity he had been by far the most agreeable Abyssinian I had yet encountered—I started at 5 a.m., and went off at a good pace, which was sustained across the plains of Lamgué, a tract of country resembling the earlier levels passed on the previous days, but smaller in extent. The lake was visible on our right hand at intervals, and small isolated mounts rose here and there; and when a rather sharp curve to the left, leading over a break in a mountain chain, was reached, as we ascended its heights distant views of the south end of Lake Tzana broke upon us, whilst the flat level of Foggora ran below our right front.

No sail specked the calm surface of the lake, and when I asked my guides the reason of this absence of life the answer returned was, that at present the principal islands were occupied by the late Governor of Dagossa, who, I have previously stated, was in revolt; that he had seized all the boats, causing a cessation of communication between the islands and the mainland. I doubt the existence at all times of anything more advanced in shipbuilding than mere rafts.

The route ran through a succession of valleys and defiles, where waving palms and huge flowering cacti grew in luxuriant abundance; masses of a dense red-blossomed creeper, covering the ground and climbing the rocks, fell in clusters around us, the whole frequently combining in such happy natural arrangement as to resemble artistic and garden-like grouping. Honeysuckle and convolvuli loaded the air with perfume, and tiny, bubbling torrents murmured busily from mountain clefts. Precipitous rocks bounded these riches of fragrance and bloom with lofty, towering walls, their summits crowned with quaint blocks and masses of detached stone clinging together and assuming fantastic and

picturesque shapes ; whilst at times, overhanging the valley, they threatened momentarily to break from their apparently tottering and projecting positions, and crash thundering on the sward below.

Gradually completing the ascent, we gained the undulating crest of a range of hills running in an easterly direction and enclosing Foggora on its northern side, the lake washing its western shore, whilst a farther chain at its southern extremity, at a distance of about eight miles, hid from us the district of Dara. We passed innumerable churches, many small villages, and the stream of camp-followers meeting us was incessant. Our journey was effected without the slightest molestation, in the most perfect security, and constantly, when accident brought us in contact with men of obvious consideration, bound in the same direction as myself, they would accompany me, putting all sorts of questions : curious as to my clothing, food, and customs, but especially as to my religion, behaving always with goodwill and perfect politeness ; I seemed to have left rudeness and insult at the frontier.

My statement that I was a Christian was ever

received with much approval, but disappointment was evinced at my being unable to produce the national emblem, a blue cord around the neck, it being hard to convince them that all Christian nations were not possessed of the same distinctive badge of baptism.

The highway was traversed freely by all, the young and extremely aged being both represented. It must, however, be confessed that on several occasions lawlessness and licence were exhibited on the part of swaggering warriors, and many were the appropriations of cooking-pots and pans from weaker wayfarers of which I was a witness ; and once in my presence an old woman was despoiled not only of her domestic utensils but of a huge bundle of wild-peas which she was conveying home for the family meal. Still, when it is considered that we were now meeting the members of an army disbanded on the close of the campaign *en masse*, the men composing it being simply told to find their way to their homes, it cannot be considered surprising that, unchecked by any visible restraint, they should help themselves on the road in a country where might is undoubted right. I saw no cruel violence exhibited, nor arms employed ;

in fact the resistance was usually so slight, was possibly regarded as so hopeless, that it might have been supposed the custom of the country was being followed, and that no infraction of national law was involved in these acts of spoliation.

We now, shortly after midday, halted opposite the porch of the church of Faag, in the district of Batah, in which most of my Abyssinian followers hastened to pay their devotions. The village was built on the slope of the hill adjoining, and consisted of several portions, each fenced in by a high reed-hedge; and the district of Batah is generally employed in the construction of native cotton cloths, and three qualities of whiskey. I had previously met caravans of mules conveying cotton-bales on our route whilst stopping at Lamgué. The manufactures are extremely coarse, and are of the two descriptions principally used in the universal male garment. The best spirit was much inferior to that which I had tasted at the Betwiddet's family mansion; the inferior sorts were simply detestable, rank and harsh in taste, and brown in colour.

Quitting Faag, we rode along the crest of the

hills, and, about a mile farther, we passed a large monastery and market-place. We were now journeying in company with an aged official who had arrived from the distant province of Kwara, on his road to meet the Ras. A mounted attendant preceded him, carrying his sword, which I took a private opportunity of examining, easily bribing the bearer with a few pinches of powdered tobacco. It was unlike those usually worn, was straight and broad, very long and heavy in the blade, covered with a dull red scabbard much ornamented with silver, and bore an inscription on its steel surface. The venerable proprietor himself travelled by very short daily stages, and did not at all seem to understand my proposal to reach Amoura Gedal that evening.

The road shortly descended once more into the plains through a thick shrubbery, the various scented woods and wild plants exhaling frequently a very powerful and pleasant odour, and in about two hours after quitting Faag we crossed the bridge spanning the Reb, attributed to Facilidas. The stream at this spot is considerable, but bridges in this country are very unusual, and I was therefore surprised to see one on so ambitious a scale. It consisted of

three arches very substantially built of brick, surmounted by a causeway twenty feet wide, and as the river here runs between high banks it was naturally raised a considerable height above the stream. It was much out of repair, and bore signs of wanton injury.

Facilidas, who reigned from 1632 to 1665, and restored the national religion, expelling the Portuguese priesthood, who had succeeded in temporarily making Roman Catholicism the established faith, is a favourite Abyssinian monarch, and to him are attributed most of the buildings superior in size and solidity to any attempted in more recent days. Of these now unfortunately only ruins exist. It seems more probable, however, that they were constructed at a rather earlier date, and were the work of the Portuguese artizans imported by zealous and ambitious missionaries in 1600.

A level tract of varying width, enclosed by low mountain ranges, loosely covered with shrubs and trees, now led us towards Amoura Gedal, and at 4.30 a.m., at the foot of the remarkable isolated rock which rises erect from the plains, we were able to distinguish the tents of the Ras's encampment, and about the same period met his

eldest son, who was hurrying on in advance, accompanied by a few attendants, armed with paternal permission to make the best of his way to Frangar. He informed me that I should find his father resting for the night, but that the king would undoubtedly quit Debra Tabor on the morrow, or next day at latest. Advising me to press on in order to obtain an interview with Ras Areya that evening, he passed on his way.

I had lately often noticed on the route a laden donkey, driven by a man on foot, which seemed to constitute one of our party. On those occasions when I had found him in front of me, the driver had used the opportunity to beg a pinch of tobacco to be used as snuff, and I had supposed that he was a wayfarer journeying in the same direction, who had joined himself to a larger party for companionship and safety. At this stage of our march there suddenly appeared another fellow-traveller, whom I at once recognized as a retainer of Barambaras, by name Arattah, who, mounted on one of my mules, also cheerfully constituted himself a member of my caravan, driving before him a wretched manacled being, who was forced to keep pace

with the mules. On inquiry I found that the donkey was bearing presents to Ras Areya; the prisoner was also on his way to the great man to take his trial, having been concerned in the revolt in Dagossa, both being forwarded by the border chief.

I had a shrewd suspicion that Barambaras had availed himself of these excuses to place in my party some one who should be able to carry back a report of my proceedings to him, and, in any case, I confess I felt indignant at having been made use of as a sort of prison van by the "key of the frontier." My near approach, however, to the most powerful subject in the kingdom made me indifferent to minor matters, and I now sent forward the Abyssinian interpreter to ascertain in what spot in the vicinity of the Ras I might make my encampment, and at what hour I could obtain an interview. He was accompanied by Gooroo Pooroo, the messenger to the Soudan, who was himself a native of Dembea and a subject of the Ras, but who, up to the present, had been rather an encumbrance than an aid to me.

CHAPTER X.

The Granite Pillar—The Ras's Encampment—My Camp—
Toilette—Interview—Are you a Christian?—Presents
—Rain—Night—Baijernout Ingeddah—Have you a
Watch?—Leave Amoura Gedal—Road to Debra
Tabor—Debra Tabor.

IN a large open space, surrounded on three sides by mountains, rose an extraordinary conical pillar of bare granite rock, three hundred feet in height, tapering gradually to its summit, and destitute, save at its base, of all vegetation. It stood out in strong relief, a vast natural obelisk.

Formed in a large ring at its base the numerous tents of the encampment were spread about; two circular white ones of large size, conspicuous amongst the smaller ordinary ones, which are triangular in shape and black in colour, indicated the abode of Ras Areya. Many of the less

favoured soldiery formed groups on the ground, and were huddled around fires, used not so much for culinary purposes as grateful in the cool evenings for the warmth obtained from them. Mules and horses were tethered to pegs in the centre space, and outside the ring again were gathered camp-followers, male and female, of all degrees of dirt and misery.

My messengers returned with a species of camp master of the ceremonies, who pointed out to me the direction in which it was advisable for me to take up my quarters, and Gooroo Pooroo departed once more to learn at what hour an interview could be fixed, the Ras being at that time, I was informed, asleep. My arrangements were easily made. I selected some rather low ground, sheltered from the wind by a rising bank and some short thick bushes; along this my mules were tethered in a line, whilst the men composing my party occupied the inner ground beyond them, the guides sleeping at intervals between the mules. Pack-saddles and heavy baggage were piled up at different points around us, for it was necessary to make a disposition calculated to defeat the predatory instincts of the many idlers and camp-

followers attracted by the Ras's progress. There was, however, one discomfort which it was beyond my power to mitigate or guard against; the rain, beginning in a mountain drizzle, was shortly upon us in torrents.

Our preparations had not been completed without drawing together a considerable crowd of spectators, who viewed all my movements with lively curiosity; and as it became necessary for me, as an Egyptian representative, to appear before the Ras in the imposing national garment described in an earlier chapter, they really were provided later on with an amusing entertainment. In an open field, with an umbrella held over my head, for it was raining heavily, I commenced my toilette. Each piece of clothing was drawn from a box, in which I sat in a cross-legged position, the ground being wet and muddy, and as I removed or replaced each article on my person, a loud murmur went up from my audience commemorative of the event, and my only means of concealment from their curiosity was the insertion of my feet and legs in the said box. It was perplexing and absurd, and I am forced to add that the final effect produced on the native mind was not

commensurate with the trouble undergone, and my *tout ensemble* in the black frock coat and red tarboosh was greeted with a shout derisive rather than congratulatory.

The evening was drawing on, and I had received as yet no answer. I grew impatient, for I knew that I could not proceed without Ras Areya's permission, and, if I did not see him this day, I should be obliged to accompany him on his return journey on the morrow. Arattah then volunteered to go in search of a reply. This means I certainly had no faith in, for there is considerable etiquette observed in approaching a man of the Ras's position, and I did not believe he would be even allowed in the vicinity of the great man's abode. I determined, therefore, to brave all breach of rule, and, taking my interpreter, I walked straight through the guards as far as the principal tent, to the obvious trepidation of the beholders. I was subsequently informed that the penalty of such transgression is the loss of the right hand.

At the door I was stopped by a chamberlain, to whom I made known my wishes, accompanied by a gift quietly conveyed by the Abyssinian

linguist, and I then discovered that this was the first formal request made for an interview, my messenger not having as yet dared or thought fit to prefer my demand. I was asked into the first or exterior tent, which was quite bare, while the official disappeared into the inner one. After a short interval, he returned, asking me to wait. In a few minutes a couch was brought in and carpets laid down, and almost immediately several officers about the Ras's person entered, and then, supported on either side by two retainers, the Ras himself. He was placed in a recumbent position on the couch, and either really was, or affected to be, much fatigued.

Between seventy and eighty years of age, slight of figure, and of medium height, his marked, stern features formed one of the most hard and merciless faces I have ever encountered. His eyes, slightly filmy, were cold and pitiless, giving an impression of being lighter in colour than they really were; the mouth, depressed at the corners and thin-lipped, was firm and inflexible; whilst the hands, thin and nervous, moved restlessly about his person. In attire he was most simple; his garment was the

usual one, and no pretension or masquerade of state was attempted by this real, if not nominal, ruler of the country.

I was seated on a carpet at his right hand, my two interpreters occupying positions next me. About ten favoured officials lined the left side of the tent, standing, one of his sons alone being permitted a less formal position in his presence. The latter, about thirty years of age, was heavy in person and aspect, and bore but slight traces of resemblance to his parent.

The two attendants who had supported the Ras on his entrance continued busily engaged in rubbing and tapping his limbs, subjecting him to a sort of shampooing process. Apparently benefited by this treatment, in a few minutes he turned a long, scrutinizing glance upon me, and, after a few customary greetings, explained that he suffered much from bodily aches, and was now tired out with the ride from Debra Tabor. "Was I a Christian?" he asked. I replied that all Englishmen were of that religion, but had barely finished my remark when Ahmed burst into an exclamation,

"Anna Christus! Anna Christus! I am a Christian."

Now of course everything respecting us was well known, and Ahmed's nationality and belief were no secrets.

The envoy who had accompanied us from Keddarif and was present, at once made a subdued but derisive snort, and smiles of a mocking and amused description passed amongst the surrounding officials. However, the Ras, though obviously incredulous, made no farther remark on the subject than that he was pleased to hear it, and then commenced a more lengthened speech, treating Ahmed's sudden and craven disavowal of his faith with obvious indifference. I knew well that such was Ahmed's disquietude at this period touching the safety of his valuable frame, that the wildest proposition made to him to become Mormon, or even total abstainer, would have met with a ready and instantaneous assent. Ras Areya commenced his address in a weary tone, but increased in vigour and animation as he proceeded, and it was clear to me that his will and energy were superior to his worn-out corporeal frame. He had left Debra Tabor, he said, that morning, and had heard of my arrival in the country some time past; he had hoped to have seen me in

conjunction with the king, and to have arranged such matters as were presented for settlement by the Governor-General of the Soudan on the part of the Egyptian Government; but unable to remain longer at Debra Tabor, his presence being required in Dembea, he should see me on my return from the king. In order that my road might be rendered easy from this point, he should furnish me with a servant of his household, who would act as guide and chamberlain during my residence in the country. He finished with many civil speeches respecting the Governor-General, and hoped to see me early in the morning. This terminated my interview, and I withdrew.

A first visit in Abyssinia to a man of position is a merely formal and complimentary one, and, however pressed for time, before business matters can be considered and discussed the visit must be repeated. I therefore mentioned to the chamberlain that I was provided with presents which it would be better to give as soon as possible, in face of the very early hour which would be sure to be selected for the Ras's departure in the morning; and hardly had I reached my temporary

abode when a fresh servant arrived to say that the presents could be received as soon as I pleased.

On my second entrance to the minister's presence, ten years seemed to have been removed from his head; his face was brightened with the promised excitement of something novel, and it was evident that an almost boyish eagerness existed to examine the foreign gifts. Obviously much pleased with all, especially with two Winchester rifles and ammunition, at the sight of which his eyes glittered, he broke into complimentary speeches respecting the Governor-General, and, once fairly wound up, forgot his illness and fatigue in the truly national keenness for acquisition. At least five times I was called upon to explain the principle of loading and unloading one of the rifles, and trembled when the demon of curiosity prompted him to the modest request that I would take it to pieces and re-construct it. I explained that, as I might very possibly succeed in taking it to pieces, but fail in the second portion of the proposed task, it would be better to believe in the weapon without an investigation of its interior. In this he acquiesced, after everyone in the tent had

had his life in jeopardy on at least half a dozen occasions by the weapon being directed at his head, whilst one or the other of the Ras's favourites went through the motions of loading with ball cartridge in a naive and experimental manner.

Honey-wine then made its appearance, and, during the consumption of two decanters of this beverage, the Ras made his concluding harangue.

"Doubtless I had heard that he was the king's chosen councillor, and that the real administration of all national matters rested in his hands. I should go forward and see Johannes, but the eventual dispensation of affairs would be decided by him, for which I should have to return to Frangar. He was by right himself a sovereign prince, but his son (figurative) reigned in his stead, and he was satisfied. Do not believe those who tell you I am your enemy. We are one."

After this affable speech—which brought the visit to a conclusion—I retired, heartily pleased that my journey to Debra Tabor was not to be interrupted, and that things had so far gone well.

Unhappily the rain had increased to a steady

downpour, and the night was dark and miserable. A small pool had collected around the spot selected by me for my night's rest, and, although I arranged my umbrella over my head and my waterproof-coat over my legs, my bed formed an island in a small lake, and was wet through; thus it was useless trying to cheat oneself into the idea that any portion of one's person was really dry. Spite of weariness—for we had ridden twelve hours this day, ten yesterday, and I had had no sleep for two nights—I remained wakeful, and listened to the rain pattering steadily down, whilst a dim flash in front of me, with an occasional metallic clank, revealed the presence of the miserable prisoner, philosophically soaking on probably the last occasion before torture and death. His gaoler sat beside him, a lantern between them, and administered his supper, placing soppy pieces of bread in his mouth; and I thought it hard that his last meal and his last hours should be rendered so unpleasantly moist; but civilized habits and mental pursuits unfit men for rude hardships, and although the being of cultivated tastes may pass through the same rough trials for a time as the houseless savage, the habit of life of the one is

the avoidance, the daily use of the other the endurance of bodily discomfort. With educated man, to a great extent, literary culture pursued in pleasant retreats supersedes corporeal fatigue and exposure to inclement seasons; and he who has once known luxury and ease has the power of making comparisons which aggravate disagreeable positions and render him less tolerant of misery.

I have no doubt, to the man whom I was pitying, the condition of the weather was a matter of supreme indifference, born of a lifelong disregard to climatic changes; and surely the saying that "knowledge is power," might well be supplemented by one equally true, that knowledge is care; for all knowledge increases mental responsibility and action, and every past experience of pleasure or pain creates an attendant train of thought sure to be evoked and reproduced at some future period in happy or sad reminiscence. When memory takes a mournful phase relating to moments repented and beyond recall, it is entitled conscience or remorse, and is the more serious form of retrospect; but this rule of mental action applies equally to the lighter events of life, and the Nemesis of self-

indulgence awaits us throughout our future in small or great regrets. At the present moment I remembered, with self-reproach and sadness, that I had left my tent behind me at Chelga, and useless visions of the dry interior afforded by its protecting folds unsettled my mental composure. A heavy thunderstorm completed the rigours of the night.

In the early morning, about 5 a.m., I took Ahmed and Fadl el Moula to pay the Ras a farewell visit. I found his tents already struck, and the minister was sitting on the ground in a rather dirty wrapper, the centre figure of about twenty friends, in the midst of whom flared up a large wood fire. A short conversation ensued, then calling to him a member of his household standing a slight distance off, he introduced him to me as my future factotum, under the slightly difficult appellation of Bai-je-r-nont Ingeddah. I was in the act of calculating how long it took a people so wonderfully christened to know their own names, and was quitting the group, after leave-taking, when Ras Areya suddenly asked me if I had a watch to spare.

Now watches were at a premium with me, both mine being damaged, but I remembered

that Ahmed was possessed of a stout and unreliable silver timepiece, which, boasting all modern improvements, keyless, and jewelled in innumerable holes, had cost originally £4 in Kartoum, equivalent to about £3 in Europe. Wishing to please the Ras, and bearing in mind the many times my Egyptian friend had volunteered self-sacrifice, I at once presented this valuable article, which I extracted from the dragoman's pocket, with thanks to him for the self-denial which prompted the offer; but Ahmed's smile in return was sallow and sickly, and I doubted whether he considered his watch amongst those things peculiarly suited as presents to *les hauts personnages*. The Ras received the watch with thanks, after which I took my departure.

In an hour no vestige of the camp remained, and, quitting Amoura Gedal in torrents of rain, we commenced the ascent of some mountains on the right, leading in a southerly direction; but the mist was so thick that little was to be seen, and the track was both narrow and slippery. Rough ascents and rougher descents constituted the route, which led always over mountains, and

the distance of ten miles took us several hours to accomplish.

Bai-jer-nont Ingeddah, my new guide, slight in face and person, about thirty-five years of age, of strongly-marked aquiline features and prominent dark eyes, led the way apparently well-intentioned and civil, a national disregard for the torrents which fell without intermission characterizing his progress; but, shortly after starting, one of the mules broke down and had to be left behind, his burden being shifted to another, and by this time all the animals were terribly weary with hard work and insufficient food—indeed, I had to perform much of the journey on foot, the paths being too steep and stony for my worn-out quadruped.

At length, on gaining the ridge of a lofty eminence after one of the worst and longest ascents, the church of Gaffat and Mount of Debra Tabor appeared in the distance, and inspired me with renewed zeal. A long, undulating sweep of down also furnished better going, and I kept riding towards the distant goal in a steady, persistent manner, but was somewhat disappointed later on to find that the object first taken to be

Debra Tabor was in truth the large church close to the hill of Gaffat, some two miles nearer to us. Still a winding path, surpassing in difficulty all we had previously encountered, led gradually into a plain beneath, and held forth hopes of a speedy termination to our march; and, progressing more rapidly along the flat, we shortly came below the church which had raised prematurely our hopes in the distance.

This building differed in some degree from the many previously seen, an ambitious design having originally existed to surround the whole of the mount on which it stood with successive flights of steps from the base to the summit. This idea had been, however, but imperfectly fulfilled, and two sides only were completed. The district of Debra Tabor, the capital of the province of Begumder, occupies four eminences, of which this church crowns one. On another, Gaffat, immediately adjacent, several small villages were scattered, and the ground at its base was covered with extensive remains of forts and foundries. At a slight distance, also, the ruins of a stone-built town were still visible.

Debra Tabor, created originally by Ras Giksa, is of small importance until the reign of Theo-

dorus, who, after he had established himself in supreme authority, evinced a preference for the southern provinces, and moved the court to Debra Tabor. The European workmen whom he detained were stationed at Gaffat, and stone-built houses were constructed for them, but of these the remains only can be traced, for, on his hasty departure for Magdala, they were razed to the ground and Debra Tabor was burned.

Theodorus, the Abyssinian monarch with whom Europeans are best acquainted, was an illustration of the instability of an uncivilized nature, and the man who had been distinguished throughout his earlier successful career by justice and humanity—unusual qualities, which, combined with undoubted courage, had raised him to great popularity in the country—when overtaken by adversity lapsed quickly into barbarism, and, steeping his better inclinations in drunkenness, commemorated his downfall with the usual cruelties of the savage. He is still, however, favourably remembered and spoken of.

There is but little reticence exercised in conversing on the English invasion, and the Abyssinians are distinguished by less swagger and belief in their invincibility than are the inhabit-

ants of most secluded kingdoms. There is no overweening faith in national power against foreigners, and it was clear that, however damaging to the pride of the country, the expedition had left a deep-seated and wide-spread impression of English might and far-reaching striking power. I noticed this the more as I had years previously in another self-contained land encountered the reverse, and no Chinaman ever admitted or believed that his country had been actually worsted by the outside barbarian; and so skilfully were events ignored and concealed by the government that real knowledge of them was confined to those dwelling in the vicinity of the actual scenes of conflict. There is a great difference in the extent of the kingdoms compared, and doubtless a high past civilization long enjoyed has had considerable influence in causing the Celestial to underrate other nations; but pretensions are not always measured by the power possessed, and I was prepared for less modesty than I found.

The third hill is surmounted by the king's palace, and the fourth holds yet another church embosomed in lofty trees, a village, and a residence on its highest point, tenanted at the time of my

visit by Ras Alulu, Governor of the Gallas, a son-in-law of Ras Areya, acting, during the absence of the latter, as minister to Johannes.

Several hundred tents of all sizes studded the elevated highland on which Ras Alulu dwelt, and contained various provincial officials with their suites, and the king's standing army. These canvas dwellings stretched away on all sides, connecting the hills which lay, as it were, in a basin, distant mountain chains environing the horizon in every direction.

On reaching Debra Tabor, I was informed that all was in readiness for the king's departure early on the morrow; my first object, therefore, was to attain the height on the summit of which stood the royal residence. I had outstripped the servants and baggage mules, but retained with me my two interpreters and Ingeddah. Gooroo Pooroo had preceded me as usual with the ordinary flourish of announcing my arrival, and I observed was already somewhat jealous of my new guide, who had volunteered the same service. The hill was extremely steep, its upper portion being surrounded by a wall, inside which was the king's house standing in a courtyard.

At a gate of entrance was posted a porter, and thronging the hill in its vicinity was a large crowd, amounting to hundreds, of petitioners and retainers, hanging about waiting or hoping for admittance. Whilst expecting the return of my messenger, I found myself much incommoded by the numbers of persons moving about, and by their loudly expressed comments on my personal appearance; I therefore, when I considered sufficient time had elapsed to justify his re-appearance and he failed to return, desired Ingeddah to penetrate the sacred interior and acquaint the Abyssinian monarch with my desire for an interview. In a quarter of an hour he came back, bearing the unwelcome news that I could not be received at present, as it would be informal and the day was the Sabbath; but the king had deputed Ras Alulu to take charge of me and show me my place of abode, and also on the morrow to introduce me to the royal presence. But even while he spoke I found myself beside the Ras, who came forward suddenly from the gate and greeted me smilingly.

CHAPTER XI.

Ras Alulu—Attire—Abyssinian Ages—His House—My
Tents—Guard—Daily Bread—Reception of Presents
—Food—Smoking—Visit to the “King of Kings of
Ethiopia”—The Palace—His Majesty—The Etchegué
—Presents.

I WAS certainly much pre-possessed with the appearance of the Ras Alulu, who looked by far the best bred and most handsome Abyssinian I had yet seen. Of medium height, about thirty-five years of age, his face, oval in outline, was decidedly bronze in hue; large dark eyes, aquiline nose, and well-shaped mouth and chin completed a countenance unadorned by whisker or moustache; his hair, worn short, was crisp and curly, and free from the numerous partings in general use. He was clothed in a very fine white tunic arranged in longitudinal plaits; com-

encing at the base of the neck, it was confined at the waist by a girdle composed of many rolls of violet silk, and descended below the knee to within a foot of the ankles, which were ornamented with bangles formed of round gold beads; long hanging sleeves of the same colour and material as the girdle covered his arms to below the elbow, a gold chain with amulet attached was suspended around his neck, and a handsome, gold-hilted poniard thrust in his girdle; a very curly sword in a red leather scabbard, carrying a large silver ball at its lowest extremity, completed his costume, which presented a vast and pleasing contrast to the generally worn native wrapper. No covering of any description encumbered his feet, which were carefully tended and symmetrical; but, on longer acquaintance with him, I discovered that he was a decided "swell" and never walked; thus his feet were preserved in what I am bound to state was an exceptional condition.

Abyssinians wear their years lightly, and I was subsequently surprised to learn that Alulu was more than forty, an age he certainly did not look; but I was in the same manner deceived with reference to Ras Areya, whom it was hard

to believe, from his appearance and habits, to be much over sixty.

On a signal, attendants brought the minister's horse, caparisoned in the national fashion with scarlet saddle-cloth, the headstall and bridle ornamented at intervals of three inches with embossed silver plates, the size and shape of an old five-shilling-piece. Previous to mounting, with a few preparatory words of greeting, he conveyed to me the kind wishes of the king, adding the desire that I should repose after the fatiguing journey I had undergone, and visit him in the morning. He then led the way down the hill in the direction of his own residence.

A ten-foot high thick reed-fence enclosed three or four ordinary circular houses, in the centre one of which we were now received and welcomed by Ras Alulu. It differed in no respect, save superior cleanliness, from those I had been previously entertained in; and a couch at the farther end, and a few rugs and carpets, Turkish and British, were the only articles of furniture. His wine was excellent, and I found that throughout everything around him was the best that the country afforded. Horns, to contain the hydromel, were tastefully shaped and

massively mounted in silver. A Birmingham electro-plated coffee-pot did duty as a ewer, and two sacramental-looking goblets, with one of which I was honoured, were produced, unostentatiously it is true, but with somewhat the same concealed pride with which a European millionaire might place some priceless object of vertu before a known connoisseur and revel internally in his admiring astonishment. Half an hour was spent in general conversation respecting the route, the Soudan, the comparative temperatures of Abyssinia and that country, and of course the leading question was put, "Was I a Christian?" After which a servant entered, to signify that our tents were ready, and I made my adieux.

On reaching the space occupied by my tents I found a guard of twenty men and an officer drawn up, who, I was informed, would remain attached to me during my stay in the country.

The tent assigned to me was an excellent large one of black cloth, tapering in triangular form to the roof, whilst that awaiting the interpreters was circular, of white canvas, and, either accidentally or in sarcastic compliment to Ahmed's recent conversion, bore on its summit a large,

conspicuous red cross. As both its inhabitants were Mussulmans, I could not avoid a suspicion of intentional satire in the arrangement. A smaller one was devoted to my domestics and the kitchen.

On entering my canvas abode I found that a couch and several rugs and carpets had been sent me by royal forethought, which enabled me to give the interior a comfortable aspect. The couch is placed, according to Abyssinian etiquette, facing the entrance, at the far end of the room, a carpet leading up the centre to it, and it is entirely dependent on the amount of cordiality wished to be extended to a visitor whether a share of the couch be offered him or not. Many of the king's carpets were of English manufacture, and well-known patterns greeted me.

Hardly had I arranged the interior to my satisfaction when a messenger arrived from the king, with a formidable list of what it was the royal pleasure I should be supplied with daily during my stay at the court. Great ceremony was observed in the reception of the king's gift, at which it was intimated that my presence was personally required.

Bai-*jer-nont* Ingeddah and Gooroo Pooroo, officiating as chamberlains, posted themselves at the entrance, whilst I occupied a position in the background. The officer of the royal household stood facing us, and grouped in his rear was a long train of domestics, male and female, some leading animals, others carrying the portable articles on their heads or shoulders. Four oxen, eight sheep, six vases of wine, six baskets of bread, two jars of butter, two of red-pepper, and a large jar of honey, twelve chickens, and some milk constituted the donation. As each item was announced it was brought forward, and acknowledged in the most reverential manner by my two representatives, who salaamed, their foreheads touching the ground, and repeated vicariously my grateful recognition of the profuse hospitality.

The ceremony occupied some time, and the subsequent distribution proved extremely perplexing; but I found it absolutely necessary, in a country framed on a patriarchal scale, where the wants of animal existence constitute the chief daily business of life and the domestics composing a household form a large family, to supervise the division to a certain extent myself; for I

discovered that, when left entirely in the hands of subordinates, injustice and peculation followed, and much discontent was bred by an unfair award of the maintenance, the wine being a special bone of contention. Native beer is the usual beverage of domestics and the humbler classes, but in consequence of the large quantities of hydromel sent me, a good deal fell to the share of my household.

A little later in the day, a repetition of the preceding ceremony on a smaller scale took place, a gift from Ras Alulu of one ox, two sheep, a large horn of honey wine, bread, butter, pepper, &c., necessitating a reception and return of thanks with honours befitting the donor.

The jars of wine were huge brown baked earthenware pitchers, holding about twelve quarts each; the baskets of bread were circular, made of wicker-work woven in intricate-coloured patterns two and a half feet in diameter, holding each about thirty layers of moist bread of different qualities. The best and choicest sorts were placed on the top, and were whiter and more pleasant to the European palate than the others in general use, being devoid of pepper and the rather acid taste pre-

valent in the common descriptions. The red peppers I have before spoken of; they are composed of capsicums and chilis, mixed with butter and salt. The butter is only useful for cooking purposes. The chickens are always very small and young, but tender; fowls are considered unfit for eating; the milk is excellent, the eggs always bad.

When first the present made its appearance, and I observed the magnitude of its proportions, reverting to past experiences in the Flowery Land, I supposed that possibly a portion of it only was intended for acceptance; for in the Celestial kingdom, when a day arrives requiring the distribution of many gifts, it is the custom of the munificent benefactor to fit out an original and pattern donation on a fixed model, which is conveyed to the first individual honoured. This gentleman carefully selects a small portion of the contents only, returning the remainder; the vacancy is filled up, and the basket goes on another round to the next recipient, who, assisting himself in a similar manner, allows this process to be continued *ad infinitum*. I was told that no similar etiquette existed in

Abyssinia, and that the *bona fides* of the gift was beyond question.

Our tents were in the immediate vicinity of the Ras's house, whilst, at about a hundred yards interval, those of the different members composing the king's army spread around. I found my dignity rather oppressive, for, as the guard were encamped a few feet distant around my dwelling, their captain considered it his duty to remain in my doorway, whilst the two chamberlains relieved each other in sitting inside, squatting at the entrance. Under these circumstances, much difficulty existed in taking the notes and making the sketches I desired, for I well knew the suspicious dislike with which both these employments were viewed by the natives; moreover, I experienced great annoyance from the deprivation of smoking, the fragrant weed being strictly prohibited throughout the kingdom, and the pleasant penalty inflicted for infringing the law within the precincts of the court was the loss of the offender's nose—a high price to pay for the best Partaga. The edict against tobacco is fulminated by the church, but Johannes is not a *bon vivant*, and his soul, steeped

in religion and war, submits easily to the arbitrary dictation of the priesthood, and permits his body but little relaxation or conviviality. There were vineyards once in Dembea, which now are not, by royal decree.

In the evening I saw that my mules were well fed, and had their bruises attended to; then I walked round the hill, admiring the happy effect produced by the numerous camp fires. I afterwards turned in, thinking how superior was my lot in being covered by a tent in the place of a villainously dirty hut, and pondered deeply over the extraordinary idiosyncrasy which could be induced to suppose tobacco hurtful to man. Shortly after, I found myself lighting a pipe of the largest dimensions, filled with fragrant Turkish, but the chamberlain had gone to bed.

Frightened from indulging in a luxury so easily detected, and fraught with such severe penalties, the native has taken largely to snuffing, and many a time I have solaced an Abyssinian companion with pinches of powdered tobacco. I have even tempted them to go the length of chewing, but it was too daring an innovation on preconceived ideas to be accepted with full confidence, and it remained a matter

of doubt with me whether the weed in that form was appreciated by the native palate. There is no doubt that the prohibition is very strictly observed, and often in the most sequestered spots, where the chance of detection seemed out of the question, I have received a quiet shake of the head in answer to my offer of a little tobacco, and how great a sacrifice was entailed might have been well understood from the sad, self-denying glance with which the negative nod was accompanied.

I was told that Johannes had a personal dislike to smoking, and, amongst the many reasons assigned for the royal aversion to tobacco, one attributes the death of a favourite follower to poison conveyed in the weed as the cause; but I believe it may be stated, with greater justice, that religious convictions of the infallible wisdom of church judgment on earthly luxuries, rather than any individual accident, causes his adhesion to the prohibition.

At daybreak, whilst it was yet cold, after a hasty cup of coffee, I sallied forth on my visit to the king; at this hour in Abyssinia all the world is astir, and I noticed that preparations for the day's march were already commenced. Our

road ran in front of Ras Alulu's house, then descending the hill in the rear of the church, passed the village at its foot and brought us in front of the royal mount, a steep and barren height, destitute of verdure, and graced only by a few stunted trees.

On arrival at the gate we were at once admitted, and, crossing a courtyard about a hundred yards in length, in which was displayed a battery of brass guns (the gift of the British Government to Johannes in 1868, at the close of the expedition under Lord Napier), the two large houses composing the royal residence, and occupying its farther extremity, stood immediately facing us. On invitation from an official, I entered the first and smaller of the two erections, which served as a reception-room, and was thronged by a motley group of domestics and applicants for royal favour, for the royal person may be approached by the humblest subject in patriarchal fashion, and, as the monarch is absolute, matters carried to the throne are constantly settled beyond appeal in a manner entirely reversing previous local judgment; and a case was mentioned to me in which a native of the province of Chelga, having

committed a murder, and fearing the vengeance of the relatives of the deceased, fled at once to the king, and, obtaining the royal pardon by a promise of military service, was enabled to defy all the usual penalties.

The room was extremely large, at least forty feet in diameter and thirty feet in height, the columns and supporting beams of cedar, the external covering of bamboos and thatch. A carpet was pointed out as having been placed for me, and, as I was the only individual so honoured, this was doubtless a great favour; however, I was detained but a few minutes before I was ushered into the second chamber, and consequently into the presence of the monarch himself.

The room, larger than the one passed through previously, but similar to it, was without ornament or furniture, nor was there any carpet on the ground, which was bare and unboarded. An inner circle of six massive cedar columns bore aloft the roof of thatch, and beyond increased size, and a certain superiority of materials, there was but little to mark the difference between the dwelling of the king and the peasant. A wood fire smouldered on the earth in the mid-

dle; at one end, facing the king, were his two favourite chargers, and at the other, in a marvellous erection of gilt ornamented wood-work, sat Johannes II. himself. On the ground, kneeling on a square of carpet at the king's right hand, was the Etchegué, or Grand Prior, the most powerful churchman in the kingdom after the Aboonah, an aged man with a venerable silver beard, gilt crucifix in hand, clad in a huge white turban and showy ecclesiastical robes. Reclining against a pillar beyond him stood Ras Alulu, attired much as I had seen him the day before. With the exception of these three the vast apartment was unoccupied, the door-keeper remaining on the exterior.

Johannes appeared about forty-five; his features were aquiline and regular, forehead high, nose prominent and straight, eyes chilly, his general presence commanding, but an expression of settled gloom pervaded his countenance, which bore the frozen look produced by absence of the softening influence of smiles; his hair was worn in the national manner with four partings, and clubbed in a knot behind; no covering adorned the head. A mantle of crimson satin thrown over his shoulders partially concealed his

under garment, which consisted of a fine white linen or cambric tunic. The raised dais on which he reclined was elevated three steps from the ground, and ornamented with crimson and gold satin cushions and hangings; a canopy, supported on imitation spears with brazen points, surmounted it.

Led forward by the minister, and passing in front of him, I made him a deep bow, and I then, with my interpreters, took up a position on his left hand, and a long silence ensued, royalty being apparently unprepared with an observation. At length, in a rather husky voice, he trusted that I had not suffered from the fatigues of the voyage, stated that, from a previous letter from the Governor-General of the Soudan, he was aware of the object of my journey, and inquired when I had left the Soudan. Answering my reply, he expressed much surprise at the delay which had occurred in my arrival, and added some complimentary remarks with reference to the Governor-General. He then said that his departure for the sulphur springs of Wans Agué was fixed for that day, but he hoped, if I had no pressing need of immediate return, I would accompany him.

“Were there similar springs in Europe, and did Europeans avail themselves of their medicinal properties?”

I drew a short sketch of the great resort to, and supposed benefit derived from, mineral waters by western nations, in addition to the employment of hot spring baths, to which he patiently listened.

I then put the question through the Ras whether, as the king was about to move from Debra Tabor that day, the presents might be brought for acceptance at once. This was assented to, and several attendants bearing them in, laid them in front of the dais.

To Fadl el Moula I assigned the duty of exhibiting the gifts, and the skilful manner in which they were shown to advantage by him extorted from me great and amused admiration. An Englishman in a similar position would have hurried through the task, and displayed the goods in a clumsy and inartistic manner; not so the ebony Soudanee, who, had he been behind a counter all his life, could not have thrown out the silks with a more gentle but telling rustle, allowing the light to fall upon their glistening surface, and causing them to drop naturally into

graceful folds; then how delicately he handled a silver filigree, silver and gold coffee service, setting them out in careful array on the massive salver in the particular spot where they could be viewed to the best advantage; how well he managed to pass by the smaller articles without dwelling too long upon them; but how much he made of the gorgeous velvet and gold-embroidered saddle, spreading out its various portions until the whole room seemed scarcely large enough to hold the offerings. Even the handsome embossed silk which contained the governor's letter, he unwound with such deliberation as to give abundance of time to admire the expensive envelope in which the missive had been protected.

There was one awkward moment when a patent tin military case, in which certain of the gifts were contained, was discovered to be locked, and no key was forthcoming. Trying my keys, however, I fortunately found one which fitted. This the king, with royal presence of mind, retained, and my happy thought subsequently gave me considerable discomfort. Johannes expressed great satisfaction at the kind feeling prompting the presents, but all excitement was absent from voice and countenance.

He of course asked me if I was a Christian, and inquired Ahmed's nationality and belief. On being hastily informed by that worthy that although an Egyptian he was also a Christian, he congratulated him gravely on his unusual religious opinions.

Neither this conversation, which was certainly within his province, nor the previous exhibition of worldly vanities, appeared possessed of any power to move the old gentleman with the crucifix, who maintained throughout a dignified and superior reserve; but from the fact of his lips being in perpetual motion, without any audible vocal result, I imagine him to have been engaged in continuous internal controversy, or arduous lengthened prayer, far too important to suffer interruption by so insignificant an event as the arrival of a foreigner.

Johannes now gave me the customary permission to depart, deferring future conversation until our arrival in Wans Agué, and, quitting the royal residence, we rode in the direction of home.

CHAPTER XII.

Home—Off to Wans Agué—The Royal Army—Vend Denghel—Garamadin of Semyen—A Practical Joke—Scenery—Trees—Birds—Mahdera Mariam—The Blasted Plain—The Gomara—Wans Agué—Hyænas—Women—Early Visit—Royal Etiquette—Neighbourhood.

I REMARK, in the direction of home; for when I reached the spot lately occupied by my tents I found them gone, and already streaming away over the hills were all the occupants of the hundreds of canvas dwellings which had but lately surrounded me. I cannot say that either my mules, my servants, or myself were in excellent order to commence another journey, and I really had no more idea where Wans Agué was situated, or at how great a distance, than had the Arab servants who accompanied me; but as it was clearly my destination I got things ready as quickly as I could, swallowed

some breakfast, and set off to join as strange a moving assemblage of human creatures as it has happened to me in my travelled career to witness. The soldiers stationed about and moving as a body-guard with Johannes at this period amounted possibly to five thousand men, and were variously armed ; a small proportion carried Martinis and Sniders, but the Remington rifles, taken from the Egyptians in the recent campaigns, predominated, and the crescent and the star were branded on all the weapons of this type which I met in native hands. A large number of the men whom I saw at Debra Tabor were however provided only with the national sword, buckler, or spear ; and much-used muzzle-loading Enfields and decrepit double-barrelled shot-guns figured as warlike stock. It would be difficult to say at what period of decay a weapon is considered to be untrustworthy or useless by the Abyssinian, and the ingenious and complicated methods resorted to to keep the most worn-out arms on the combatant list are many and perilous.

A special road had been commenced to unite Debra Tabor with the sulphur springs for the monarch's use, but, after the completion of about

a mile, it had been abandoned, and the route we took was as rugged and painful as usual, and included stony tracks and steep and narrow causeways. The paths were thronged with every rank and grade of native subject, all bustling forward in one common direction ; but no order was maintained or attempted. Officials great and small, on mules or horses, were accompanied by running retainers who preceded and followed them, two usually remaining on either side of the horse's head, and in cases where their master was aged or infirm, these guided the animal, their hands placed on the bridle. Men on foot bore tents or tent-poles, others carried domestic utensils ; women marched sturdily along loaded with baskets of bread or huge jars of wine and beer, sometimes with children hanging on their backs ; boys of the youngest ages, already wearing warlike weapons or entrusted with their master's rifles, ran cheerily after their elders, keeping pace with them, and a miserable tail of sick and crippled vagrants, who toiled painfully along, brought up the rear. All were shouting, screaming, and gesticulating ; many engaged in apparently fierce struggles, which almost always had a friendly termination ; and

wherever passes in the mountains possessed reverberating properties echoes were raised by repeated and answering calls.

It thus happened in many of the narrow defiles that progress was frequently impeded by the numbers pressing forward. At one of these enforced halts I was struck by the countenance of a mounted chief of evident importance, both by his attendant suite and unmistakable air of command. So massive and powerfully cast a head I have rarely seen; the features were simply enormous, a nose of the most cumbersome Roman type preceding the rest of his visage, and impressing the beholder with its colossal proportions; his frame was also heavily constructed, and I thought the mule which carried him deserving of pity. I noticed that he made inquiries respecting the foreigner, and almost immediately, as their result, I received a civil inclination of the head, whilst he gradually approached me; when sufficiently near to speak he asked me after the Governor General, and then whether I personally had ever heard of Vend Denghel.

Had I not? In all information volunteered to me whilst in the Soudan respecting the

country I was about to visit, and in all my conversations, previous to leaving for Abyssinia, with anybody at all acquainted with the affairs of the kingdom, Vend Denghel, or Vend-el-Michael had figured largely.

In past years, acting independently as a border chief in the northern territory, his hand by turns against the Egyptian, by turns against Johannes, he had ravaged the Hamaseyn, to which he laid hereditary claim, and been a constant bugbear to the settlement and Roman Catholic mission of Senheit in the Bogos country. He was of princely lineage, being descended from a former sovereign of Tigré, and had been one of the many turbulent malcontents perplexing Johannes. His followers had now fallen away from him, and he had submitted himself to the king, by whom he was apparently forgiven and welcomed as an honoured councillor.

I had barely time to make an answer, to the effect that I was fully acquainted with his name and past history, when he hurried, or was hurried, forward by those around him, and I did not meet him again until my return to Debra Tabor.

There is a habit in Abyssinia of restoring repentant prodigals to high favour, but although the fatted calf is killed and external marks of honour heaped upon the recovered subject, he is surrounded by a guard of ceremony, which, flattering in appearance, acts nevertheless as a deterrent to personal freedom and future unsteadiness of conduct. It might have been accidental, but on the only two occasions on which I met Vend Denghel he or his followers were much pressed for time.

Shortly after, I passed the retinue of a native noble drawn up at the side of the road, who had been effecting a cross-country cut, and now arrived considerably the worse from bad treatment by thorns, and much splashed with mud; he was, however, evidently a man of Ras Alulu's way of thinking, and wore a picturesque and fanciful costume of white tunic and figured silk, with gold neck and leg ornaments. He had a good-tempered face, and laughingly asked my name, which I told him, and he then gravely enjoined upon a follower to bear it carefully in mind. He continued to inform me that he was the Ras Garamadin, Governor of Semyen, and made me many pressing offers of hospitality

should I pass through his territory on my return to the Soudan. He finished with a ceremonious farewell, and then trotted off with his followers; but they all "laughed so consumedly" as they retired, and seemed so highly amused, as to make me feel that a joke lay somewhere concealed. When I casually mentioned to Ras Alulu that I had met the Ras Garamadin on the route, he replied that that was an impossibility, as he was at present in Semyen, and on relating the whole incident, I found that I had been the victim of an Abyssinian practical joke.

There was much jocularità on the road, but it was universally devoid of insult or incivility, and whenever any particularly beautiful portion of the route opened out, or foliage of extra luxuriance caused me to pause admiringly, I was promptly surrounded by lingering natives, who, proud of the landscape charms of their land, shared my enthusiasm, and named repeatedly the spots or trees which excited my appreciation.

Following almost immediately on the last incident, we commenced a long and tedious descent, the path so overshadowed with trees, and so devious in its course, as to defy all visual

penetration of the country lying beyond ; whilst the difficulties presented by the rocky nature of the route, which took rapid and unexpected curves, always impeded in the most awkward spots by stony obstacles, demanded constant attention to personal safety. But, on arrival at the base, the beauty of the surrounding scene was forced suddenly upon me, and I checked my progress to view with pleasure a truly Abyssinian landscape.

We were at the entrance of a plain, richly wooded, and stretching for miles in our front, which ran between two encompassing ranges of hills following a parallel course, and covered with all shades of verdure. In our rear, and heading the plain on our right, the heights which we had recently descended enclosed us, and the path which we had found so difficult to traverse, marked by large, irregular white boulders, ran winding up its face through thickly-overhanging foliage, and formed a pleasing feature in the scene. Churches and villages dotted the mountain side, their conical roofs looking hive-like in the distance ; immense herds of cattle ranged the level pasture-land, and along the bases of the hills waved masses of

the feathery spray clothing the graceful "girar"-tree.

Mingled with mimosas, acacias, and the delicate kusso, the eccentric khumquol, of great size and height, threw aloft massive green shoots; grand sycamores reared their stately trunks and overshadowing branches, standing aloof in solitary grandeur, whilst the softer and more tender undergrowth was overrun with white and yellow jasmine, dog-roses, honeysuckle, and wild convulvi, diffusing with the many sorts of perfumed woods a heavy and delicious fragrance. Birds of song are unfortunately rare; their plumage is, however, exceedingly brilliant, and, brightly feathered in scarlet and blue, they perpetually crossed our path in short and wavering flight. A ride through any wooded tract in Abyssinia is always accompanied by a pleasant aroma proceeding from the scented barks of certain trees, and it is also most usual, on throwing a log of wood upon the fire, to find the room filled with a rich and powerful odour.

After a certain distance in this plain had been traversed we halted, and Ingeddah proceeded on a mission to find accommodation for my party. We eventually took possession of a village on

some rising ground overlooking but at a slight distance from the encampment, the horizon as usual on all sides a waving sea of mountain peaks.

The king's personal travelling arrangements were very simple in their nature: two large circular white tents were sent on in advance to be ready for his reception on arrival; he rode a white charger, with accoutrements similar to those I have described as carried by Ras Alulu, and the royal baggage (but little) was conveyed on a few mules or men's heads. There were not many tents in addition to those occupied by Johannes and his acting minister, a journey which entailed but one homeless night not being considered worthy of tent-pitching; besides, only a certain number of chosen followers remained at this spot with the king, the majority continuing the march and making the best of their way at once to Wans Agué, to which place the bulk of the tents had been forwarded direct. It is not, however, the Abyssinian custom to travel by long stages, and, unless pressed by circumstances, the march which commences at day-break or before dawn is concluded at noon, and

the remainder of the day given to the usual avocations.

No incident marked the evening, but a general air of sulkiness was worn by my interpreters, who resented the farther journey, had looked upon Debra Tabor as the uttermost extent of our pilgrimage, and were now filled with marvellous stories and deep misgivings concerning the wildness of the more southern inhabitants of Amhara. Ahmed had the impertinence to break into open reproaches, and drew a plaintive sketch of at least a year's residence at the court of King John, unalleviated by "les bouteilles;" whilst my servants, thrilled with yet darker visions of the future, and legends, before unremembered, of the fierce nature of the Galla races and their barbarous habits, now occupied the minds of the two who had been resident in Massowah, and were speedily imbibed by the others, until I was reproachfully treated as the "father" leading his children to destruction; for in the Arab primitive manner I was regarded as the father of my suite—when they were in trouble.

In the morning at five a.m. the mules were

all ready, and we recommenced a west-south-westerly course, through scenery similar to that enjoyed on the preceding day, and reached, shortly after our departure, a quaint and peculiar landmark, consisting of a huge, black, circular boulder resembling a monster shell, balanced on and terminating a ridge of rock which ran down from some hills on the left hand into the valley we were traversing. This was within the district of Mahdera Mariam, the villages composing which lay, however, at some distance in the mountains on our left; through a gap on the right we caught a view of the flat lands of Foggora, and then we crossed a hill barring our road, which was surmounted by a church and a group of handsome trees. Descending its farther side, as though by magic everything was changed; the enchanter's wand had here summoned desolation, and before me lay a bleak, barren heath, chilly and weird-looking; blasted and stunted trees, their trunks riven and shrunk, dry and withered grass, and bare and stony hills formed a melancholy and depressing contrast to the warm-toned valley we had quitted. Much, however, of this sad-featured tract had to be traversed, and I was relieved when, after some

hours, a turn to the right brought us to the edge of the river Gomara, studded thickly along both banks with short, orchard-like trees, and running at a considerable depth below us with a moderate volume of water and a rapid current.

We crossed at a ford a little lower down, the banks on both sides being about thirty feet high, steep and slippery. The villages of Wans Agué were situated on the southern side, at a point on the river about seven miles from the spot where it empties its stream into the lake. Our destination was one at a distance of a mile west of the ford, occupying a position at the base of some hills. To reach this we passed through the camp, part of the attendant multitude being provided with tent accommodation, whilst others were distributed about in the surrounding houses, or constructed for themselves temporary shelters of boughs and foliage. Ras Alulu's tent was pitched at a short distance from the king, who occupied a permanent dwelling on the river-side, fenced off within an enclosure, which contained also the sulphur spring.

My village consisted of ten houses, one of the best of which I found prepared for me; the arrangements made for my reception were, how-

ever, simple, and consisted only of some cotton hangings suspended from the beams supporting the roof, which fell around the centre, leaving this portion as my special apartment; the sides behind the hangings were tenanted by the feminine members of the proprietor's household, who as usual declined to be disturbed. I had by this time become so accustomed to this inevitable companionship that I made no remonstrance.

My mules were my first care, and I had their sores carefully dressed, and themselves well fed. It was, however, necessary to keep them at night tethered within the village, for the hyænas were numerous and determined, the country around being wild and desolate. A tempting bait of raw meat was disposed nightly behind the village, on which a rifle with fixed points was adjusted during the day, and many predatory animals of this species paid the penalty of their appetites. No nobler beasts visited us, and no traditions of lions or tigers in the vicinity existed.

Whilst on the subject of predatory incursions I must, however, mention that during my stay at Wans Agué the ladies domiciled in my residence behaved badly, for, not content with visiting me

during my meals, on which occasions they put forth all the feminine blandishments of which they were possessed to obtain glasses of absinthe or native wine and whiskey, they invariably took advantage of my absence to pay furtive incursions on these coveted beverages, and made fearful inroads on my stores. If I remonstrated gently, they laughed ; if seriously, they cried, and I must confess I found them, as Barambaras had pathetically remarked, troublesome. They developed a fine natural taste for anything to drink, and one lovely young creature nearly killed herself with Worcester sauce, [whilst the unfortunate fact that butter is a toilette indispensable, induced the most alarming attacks on that culinary necessary for purposes of personal adornment. Children of nature, they adopted their highest known aids to attractiveness, but were unimpressed by the beauty of cleanliness, and unembarrassed by extreme timidity. As I was the only foreigner who had ever been seen at Wans Agué, my clothes and appliances were objects of curiosity, and I discovered that the women, in praiseworthy search of a novel experience, tried on my boots, and tottered about in them, deriving a feeling of pleasurable excitement from the

insecurity in their gait, which they found inseparable from these hitherto unknown coverings to the feet.

In the evening I visited Ras Alulu, who invited me to join the king and himself the next morning in their first bath. Though not anxious for personal immersion, I accepted the invitation from motives of curiosity, and the following day, at early dawn, was ready to start; but Ahmed, the dragoman, could not be got to rise, being in a sulky fit, for he knew that, though necessary in the preliminary conversation, he would not be permitted entrance into the bath, and therefore objected to being disturbed so early. When at last he was in a humour to move, we were quartered at some half-hour's distance from the spring, and on arrival at the minister's tent I was informed that I was too late. No domestic was sufficiently hardy to break upon the royal privacy, so my visit to the water cure was deferred, and I awaited the return of the Ras in his tent.

It was long before he came, with profuse regrets for the mishap, but he said as the king was here specially for the water cure it was their custom to rise before daybreak, hurry down to

the spring, and remain in the bath two or three hours. Very pleasant in his manner—he always talked unaffectedly, and without restraint—he admitted that his post was a very fatiguing one, owing to Abyssinian etiquette, which required his personal attendance on the king from day-break until six in the evening, native custom on no occasion permitting him to unbend from an erect position in the royal presence; his reception for the king of officials constituted his principal periods of repose, in addition to the time occupied by the monarch's meals, which are taken in strict privacy. It seemed to me that on the whole Johannes had a right melancholy existence; ever suspicious of poison, each morsel of food or gobletful of liquid destined for the royal palate must be first partaken of by a taster. The entrance to the residence occupied by majesty was sacred; a few chosen retainers only being permitted ingress, and the demon of watchfulness guarded the monarch's every movement. I ceased to wonder at the clouded brow and gloomy aspect which had been the most prominent features impressed on me in the appearance of Johannes. Ras Alulu, on the contrary, was of a naturally lively disposition,

and exhibited amused attention to my recitals of European habits and customs; he was specially tickled at the relations of English married life, and pleased with the idea of duels and race meetings. As I carefully forbore to try his credulity with railways or balloons, I retired with a fair character for veracity as a traveller.

I was obliged on my return to my house to take to task Gooroo Pooroo for theft of fluids during my absence, and the Abyssinian defence was so curious that I feel bound to give it. On being accused, and my explaining how sorry I felt to make such a charge against a man of his position, he defiantly replied that I was wrong to bring it.

“Had I not known that he had done similar things before?”

I said most certainly I had.

“Why then had I not accused him on those occasions? My silence previously had led him to suppose his actions justified. He had taken every precaution on this occasion which decency required to conceal the theft, and as I had overlooked it before, I should have continued to do so.”

He was obviously injured at my accusation ;

and detection constitutes moral delinquency in Abyssinia as elsewhere.

The country around the little settlement of Wans Agué was wild and uncultivated, the villages small and poor. The bare, flat plains of Dara stretched away on the left until they reached the calm and sluggish waters of Tzana, beyond which were visible the distant lowlands of Maitsha on the south ; a mountain range, edging down to the lake, enclosed the Gomara on its northern bank, the river itself from Wans Agué taking a north-westerly direction, whilst its course towards Mahdera Mariam was southeasterly, on which side interminable hills surrounded us. The lofty island of Dêk rose from the waters on the west, and from the heights behind my village the northern shores of the lake were distinguishable. Numerous woods of small trees dotted the ground in our vicinity and followed the direction of the Gomara, which at this spot flowed in a stony bed overhung with foliage, and its course still higher up the stream between high enclosing banks and accompanying chains of hills was picturesque and pretty.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sulphur Spring—Wine—The Camp—Robbery—English Interpreter—Interview with Johannes—Sporting Rifles—My Chair—Back to Debra Tabor—An Old Friend—My Suite—Martial Exercises—Interview again with Johannes—Royal Standard.

DETERMINED to be in time, the next day, whilst it was yet dark, raw, and chilly, I wended my way towards the springs, and was rewarded by finding myself too early. After a short delay, the Ras led me into the enclosure on the river edge within which the king resided. Numerous groups of attendants were sitting around fires consuming their early meal in front of the high reed-fence which bounded the royal dwelling, whilst others hung about the entrance gate; but in the interior the utmost privacy prevailed, and but one domestic was visible.

The space included within the twelve-foot

high fence was possibly one hundred feet square, in the centre of which a small circular house contained the spring. This was a pool about thirty feet in circumference and four feet deep, the water rushing up with considerable force and steam through an artificial spout, and emitting a powerful but not disagreeable odour. This perfume, after a week's course of the baths, had so permeated the persons of both Johannes and the Ras that it was easily perceptible at some yards distance from them. In this tank it was the habit of the king and his minister to crouch for hours daily—I trust with beneficial results. The king was afflicted with rheumatism, but I imagine Ras Alulu's daily immersion was the result of court etiquette, and that devotion to his sovereign's interests which my friend Barambaras had so emphatically insisted on, prescribed that a well-bred subject could not have the indecency of feeling to plead freedom from an ailment afflicting his sovereign.

The morning toilette of these two distinguished persons was simple, and a cotton wrapper thrown across the shoulders was the costume of both. Mine was more complicated, for I was clad in a frock coat, tarboosh, and varnished boots—in

fact, my court suit. I therefore gracefully waived a tempting invitation to try the invigorating effect of the waters on my constitution; but, in order to bring myself on a level with the performers, I squatted at the edge of the pool, which was, however, fatally wet and slippery, and the sudden involuntary immersion of one entire leg drew a faint smile even to the melancholy countenance of Johannes.

On the conclusion of the morning duty, clad in the same simple garb, the king and councillor adjourned to a house within the enclosure, occupying a more elevated position at about twenty yards distance above the bath-house. This was the royal residence; it was small and circular, and had much the appearance within of a rustic garden pavilion. A raised seat of twisted branches at one end, covered with crimson and gold satin, formed Johannes's chair of state; an unusual luxury, however, existed in a well laid down planed floor. The conversation turning on water cures, I greatly excited the monarch's interest by a relation of my visit to certain springs in Japan; and when I mentioned that at Eumoto I had seen lakes of bubbling steaming water, the sulphur floating in masses

on its surface, and the stench reaching for miles around, he was much moved. Visions of such endless sulphurous bathing filled the royal mind with envy, and he exclaimed that the Japanese ought to be a happy people.

Life at Wans Agué would, I should imagine, under ordinary circumstances, be found by a European tame, but mine was rendered eventful by daily visits to Johannes and the Ras, whilst small domestic revolutions shook my social circle. Ahmed, by turns depressed or boisterously hilarious, when in the latter mood occasionally converted night into day with ill-advised bacchanalian melodies. This in a quiet village, unused to gay spirits with Alexandrian educations, and happening in the vicinity of a monarch sober and austere, was too remarkable to be unobserved, and a communication was made to me respecting it; moreover, I felt disturbed as to the means by which this unseemly mirth was arrived at, for Ahmed was responsible for the just distribution of the wine. On inquiry, I found that the arrangement proposed by me had been reconstructed by the wily Egyptian on a simpler scale, and that he daily consumed the portions of the officer of the guard and the two

house-stewards in addition to his own. I was much vexed, and was literally obliged from this period to dole out the beverage myself. Ahmed, on remonstrance, informed me that he had not considered the individuals despoiled were of sufficient social status to drink wine.

The camp, indeed, was most orderly. On foot at earliest dawn, it reposed in slumber as soon as the shades of evening fell, and presented a striking contrast to that which I had seen and heard previously of the native warrior; but the well-known asceticism and dislike of Johannes to excesses produced a calm not ordinarily characteristic of military life.

I had some trouble in keeping the peace between my Abyssinian followers and the Mussulmans, but between my interpreters and the native house-stewards the hatred was fierce and undisguised, and occasionally broke out into open quarrels. The munificent daily scale on which my household was supplied had by this time succeeded in forming an accumulation of many oxen and sheep. Four of the former were swept off in one night, and, as it was clearly a case of theft, I endeavoured to discover the perpetrator. Gooroo Pooroo and his brother were indicated

to me as the culprits at once by my interpreters. I thought it undesirable to make any accusation, but they learned from the domestics that they were suspected, and instinctively feeling who had been the informants, the feud with Ahmed and Fadl el Moula increased in bitterness as a result. Ingeddah and Gooroo Pooroo informed me that the two interpreters had, from my first entrance into the country, been false, and volunteered to acquaint Barambaras with all such news or intelligence as they could extract from me. As I had, however, been particularly careful, I knew that this had been of little importance.

On subsequent interviews with the minister and Johannes, I found an English-speaking interpreter present, a young native of Smyrna, and, as the king intimated that he preferred him as a medium of communication, the conversation from that period was conducted through him in English, a language which my dragoman did not understand.

One morning I found Johannes more cheerful and conversational than usual, for it must be confessed he was, as a rule, slightly depressing, and when waited for to break the silence, it not unusually happened that the reverie into which

he had plunged was so profound, and the realms travelled by his thoughts so distant, that I despaired of his recovery from its depths, or of their return until some future interview. On this occasion he made particular inquiries after Lord Napier, with whose present movements he was obviously as well acquainted as information about five years old would justify. He asked at length about our gracious Queen, mentioning his knowledge of her excellence and many virtues, and then showed me a valuable double sporting rifle by Wilkinson, with which he told me he had shot many antelopes, presented to him by Prince Albert, and which he evidently highly prized.

A single rifle given him by Ismael Pacha, the late Khedive, was produced, and he was curious to learn why the trajectories and ranges were dissimilar. This I explained in the most practical manner I could, and pointed out to him the large and smashing nature of the ball carried by the sporting rifle, against the greater range of the other weapon.

During this conversation a tremendously heavy thunder and hail storm burst upon the house with deafening violence, making it impossible to

speak or hear the voice. When this had subsided he said it had been his intention to send me back direct from Wans Agué along the lake, but that now his views were altered, and he should like me to accompany him back to Debra Tabor. It had been his first thought to give me letters, which being submitted to Ras Areya at Dembra might be ratified by him ; he now, however, wished to entrust me with verbal instructions, or, as he expressed it, "he wished me to become his letter."

In these interviews I was always accommodated with a small European cane folding chair, which was placed in the centre of the room facing Johannes ; the Ras invariably occupied his position standing on the king's right hand, and when, as on this last opportunity, nobles or officials were present, they formed a circle around the room two or three deep, according to the number present, which never exceeded fifty.

After a week's residence at Wans Agué, the order to march was given, and we turned our faces again northwards towards Debra Tabor. On arriving this time at the high bank which led to the ford I halted, wishing to allow

some baggage mules which blocked the road to advance, and also to await the arrival of my domestics, who were in the rear. There was the same hurry-scurry now in leaving as there had been in setting out for this spot, and I had excellent opportunities of observing not only the habits but the dispositions of those who passed. Amongst other traits of character, I noticed that although deceitful and prone to quick temper and quarrelling, the Abyssinian speedily forgets light injuries, and does not nurse his wrath. There was a great sense of humour amongst them, and the raised tones and violent gesticulation were employed more with the object of creating the impression of earnestness than of causing intimidation, and with the desire of shifting to less keen-witted or less determined individuals the heavier burdens and responsibilities. No trouble taken was considered too great in order to evade any allotted labour, and lounging and laziness are undoubted national characteristics. They are never cruel in their treatment of slaves or animals, but they very much over-rate the powers of endurance of the latter, when the question of walking or being carried arises; and it was a common sight on the

march to pass some miserable little mule struggling along under two long-legged Abyssinians. The custom of riding double is very general.

There had been some rain during the night, and slipping rather than walking down the bank, mules and men were in frantic confusion, and the encumbered passage across the stream and corresponding rise on the opposite side made matters worse. I therefore determined to await a more tranquil moment for my forward movement, feeling sufficiently amused with the active life in motion before me. My position commanded the road through the camp, and presently, approaching me about fifty yards off amongst the bustling crowd, I recognized the narrow face and sly features of my Tigréan acquaintance of Serramba, who had several attendants with him, seemed in affluent circumstances, and rode a handsome mule. He was quite unaware of my presence until his arrival directly opposite to me, when the crafty one immediately feigned much pleasure at the rencontre; unhappily, carried in a follower's hand, Mahomed's umbrella, with which he had absconded, was conspicuous. Concealment was too late, and at the sight of his long-lost sunshade my irate

domestic—at all times easily moved to wrath—with a scream, but no farther ceremony, rushed at the unprepared and astonished bearer, who proved utterly unequal to the emergency; the cross sank before the crescent, and my Mussulman follower snatched away the coveted trophy and bore it off in triumph. It was fortunate that the man of Tigré was both sly and polished, and pressing excuses on me with many smiles for not having returned it before, he stated that, hearing I was at the ford, he had sought me specially with the object of restoring the valued article. He proffered many thanks for the loan, and tenders of future hospitality in the event of my very improbable arrival in Tigré.

At length we moved off, and two hours after leaving were passed by the king on his white charger, with about fifty mounted officials, they travelling more rapidly than our jaded mules. At noon we halted at Mahdera Mariam, and remained there during the day and night.

Our party at this time was of imposing appearance: consisting of two interpreters, four domestics, two native stewards or masters of ceremonies, and an officer and twenty men, armed with rifles, as an escort. The order maintained

on the route varied but slightly, and Bashaw Mari (the officer), mounted on a mule, usually rode in front with several of the guard. He was a portly Christian, wore a white tunic, girt in at the waist with a cartridge-belt, and was conceited and stupid. Bai-jeer-nont Ingeddah followed, openly most conscientious and inwardly sly; then myself and interpreters, both of them sulky and bibulous; native warriors ran along the sides, the domestics came behind me, and the rear was brought up by Gooroo Pooroo and the remainder of the escort with the baggage-mules. The guards were civil and friendly, and constantly on the road robbed the fields of any such delicacies as, being partial to themselves, they imagined might be palatable to me. As these merely took the form of native peas and roots, the attention was useful more as an indication of goodwill than as a scientific form of military foraging.

Debra Tabor was reached on the next day, and the accommodation provided for me on the same spot was larger and more commodious than on the previous occasion, two tents being connected in a manner to constitute one forty feet in length.

On the morning following my arrival, the king's English-speaking interpreter paid me a long visit. I found that, after a certain amount of conversation, I could understand him fairly well, but the adoption in his sentences of rounding off colloquialisms, which he evidently considered proof of fluency and aids to polite conversation, was perplexing, and so frequent as to create a doubt in my mind as to which part was the substance of his speech and which the ornamentation. He was, however, very humble; and once, when driven to impatience, I hastily told him that I could not understand him, he replied, mildly, "I thank you, do you see." He was on this occasion charged with a message from the king. Johannes had also at this time another English-speaking linguist who had been with him for several years, and was much trusted by him. I saw him subsequently in later interviews. He was also a native of Asia Minor, by name Mahderal.

In the afternoon I was invited to see some martial exercises, which took place in front of Ras Alulu's house. In an open space about one hundred yards square, around which was collected a large body of camp-followers, several

mounted men were careering about, armed with short imitation spears, swords, and shields; they rode in the usual manner, the big toe only in the stirrups, which were worn a moderate length, their seat being decidedly a balance one, and differing entirely from that practised by Turk and Arab. A preliminary selection of adversaries was made, one challenging the other to friendly passages of arms. Starting from opposite ends, they circled around each other, delivering their javelins at suitable distances and opportunities; these were caught on the shield, or avoided by stooping. Mimic combats with swords were also gone through, but the equitation was not of a high order, and the legs were but little employed as a means of conforming the horses' movements to the riders' will. The bits in use are severe, narrow in width, and very high in the port; they are all made on one model, and are of rough, unpolished iron. The habit of checking the horse in full career is practised, but the animals themselves are usually loosely built, and their action is not compact and collected. The entertainment concluded with a general engagement of about twenty warriors mingled together and attacking each other indiscriminately. The

sword when mounted is always carried on the right side, the shield on the left arm.

The Abyssinians do not make use of any description of defensive armour, and on inquiry I was unsuccessful in discovering whether such a custom had ever prevailed.

My next interview with the king was a lengthened one, and connected principally with business matters. I was received in the same apartment, and the audience was as select as on the first occasion, but I was accommodated with the chair which had been brought from Wans Agué, and which I had now become habituated to consider my property ; it was placed as usual in the centre of the room, *vis-à-vis* to Johannes. My interpreters were present at the opening of the visit, but at the king's desire the conversation was carried on through his own linguist. Johannes talked more than usual, and touched on a variety of topics, but enlarged especially on his wrongs at the hands of Ismael, the late Khedive. I give a portion of his discourse in its short sentences and simple language.

“I had intended to write letters containing my wishes, and had consulted with the Ras Areya on the subject, but now that I have seen

you I shall trust you. My wishes will be written in your mind, and your tongue will reproduce these inscribed characters to those who sent you. Foreigners I cannot say I love or trust, but I owe much to the English, and your Queen is, I know, a sincere Christian. Why do foreign nations come here Christianizing Christians? They make trouble in my country, and are not wanted. Are there no men who are pagans to be converted? In the history of my nation, the preachers of foreign religions have filled a bloody and disastrous page. We are Christians like yourselves, with different forms; you represent a Mussulman government, and I find western nations profess great interest in Egypt. Why do not your European missionaries convert these, your friends, to Christianity?" (Here a long list of grievances against the hereditary foe followed.) "I once thought Ismael Pacha my friend; he has done me much harm; he thought he could conquer my country with few soldiers. What came of it? Arms and ammunition are stopped on their way to me; I have nevertheless subdued and forced to pay tribute both Shoa and the Gallas. When Paul came to me and told me his brother had been

murdered by men in my dominions, did I not go and lay waste their villages and slay many? I wish to consider the Egyptian Government my friend; but I have the traditions of my country in my heart, and the boundaries of Habesh were not always what they are now." (Here followed a recapitulation of former possessions.) "You have now been long in the country; had I known this, it should not have happened. I have given orders for your entertainment until you quit my land. Do you know my consul in London? My flag waves there. Search, and you will find him. I do not wish a consul at Massowah—I wish Massowah.* My first desire is to have past grievances settled. I cannot talk more on that subject. I shall forget myself." (As the usually passive monarch had risen to an erect position, and was becoming strongly excited, I was pleased that he took this view of matters.) After a few minutes' silence he grew calm, and asked me, "Will you take charge of a letter to your Queen?"

I replied, certainly.

"Will you see the standard of Ethiopia?"

* A port in the north-west of Abyssinia claimed from the Egyptians.

These were happier topics, for John's two motive principles, fanaticism and patriotism, had been strongly evoked during his previous harangue, which, as he spoke with much deliberation, occupied a long time, and had, I must confess, grown a little lengthy.

The national banner was a gorgeous production of silk, a tricolour, the coloured divisions running laterally. The highest portion was crimson, the centre white, and the lowest amethyst blue. The whole was surrounded by a rich gold fringe. On the white ground was a gilt and painted representation of the lion of Judah, with a defiant tail, and a crucifix in his right paw. The staff was blue, jointed, and mounted in brass, and surmounted by a large brass gilt cross.

The king seemed very proud of this national emblem, and at his desire Ras Alulu, aided by Mahderal, shook out its folds and struggled about the apartment under its weight. After a pleased contemplation of this performance, the monarch's troubled spirit grew calm, and fell into more prosaic channels, for he suddenly put the somewhat puzzling question to me, "How much should such a standard cost?" As I was

quite sure that he must have paid a price disproportionate to its real value, I mentioned a sum beyond its worth, not wishing to give disappointment.

After this I took my leave, meeting Vend Denghel on the road back. I was, however, only able to exchange a few common-place courtesies with him. Ten minutes later, Lidi Booroo, a native of the Hamaseyn, also encountered me on the hill near my tent, and, introducing himself, desired to be remembered to the Governor-General.

CHAPTER XIV.

Abyssinian Candles—Cold Nights—Adieu to Johannes—
 Bracelet—Leave Debra Tabor—Johannes's Last Greet-
 ings—Amoor Gedal—Bashaw Mari—Depredations—
 The Reb—Night Quarters at Faag—Domestic Troubles
 —Tzana—Cotton Industries—My Tent—The Minister's
 Court at Frangar.

I PASSED the evenings at Debra Tabor within my tent, for there was but little inducement to quit one's habitation after dusk, the watch-fires gleaming on the hills, and a few stragglers, serving as the only evidences of life an hour after sunset. The nights were chilly, and I found the customary wood fire both necessary and cheerful. Around a few crackling logs, therefore, I collected the most intelligent of my retainers, and consumed time in extracting from them such information as they were disposed to impart; but my couch was always sought in self-defence at an early hour,

for the world was once more astir at break of day.

My tent was singular from the splendour of illumination at my command. I never burnt less than two candles, which, considering the length of my apartment and the black material of which it was composed, failed to do more than render the farther ends visible; but the steady light afforded by these was a luxury of a high order in a land where the only means of alleviating darkness possessed by men even of Ras Alulu's position consisted of wretched thin tallow torches, four feet long, with a primitive cotton wick, held in the hands of attendants. These produced a miserable, inefficient light, guttering in lumps down their length, sometimes burning in a dull, subdued manner, whilst at others they flared suddenly with an unexpected flame. The effect was ghastly, and I felt that the most determined conviviality must have succumbed to such spasmodic and feeble lighting. I had fortunately provided myself with an abundant store of composition candles, and enjoyed nightly the aforesaid reckless brilliancy effected by two in small spring-lamps and shades.

In consequence of the cold air prevailing at night, it became a custom for the men composing the guard to huddle around my tent on the side protected from the wind, and when they judged that I was asleep, they improved their position by gradually working their persons beneath the canvas into the interior. It thus happened that on one occasion, when I awoke suddenly, I saw by the expiring light of the fire three dusky forms, bent low and concealing themselves, creeping noiselessly across the tent. Not expecting treachery, but still not understanding their appearance, and suspicious of theft, I jumped up, and they at once bolted underneath the door-flap. It had a mysterious and unpleasant appearance, but on inquiring in the morning, I found that Bashaw Mari and his men, not being supplied with tents, were in the habit of waiting until they supposed me wrapped in slumber, and then, sneaking in, a certain nightly proportion of them quietly occupied the farther end of my tent. My disturbers had been the advanced guard, and their somewhat incautious entrance had aroused me; notions of foul play never troubled my mind, and precautions for safety in a position so utterly defence-

less as mine would have been as ridiculous as useless.

A final interview with Johannes, in which he was very kind and friendly, terminated the necessity of a longer residence at Debra Tabor. In this he entrusted me with a letter, to be given to the Governor-General for transmission to Her Majesty, and, after repeated wishes from him of a safe journey back to the Soudan, and escape from the fevers of Metemnah, I prepared, having paid a final visit to Ras Alulu, to take my departure.

The king made me several presents previous to my leaving, the most curious of which was a bracelet of gold and silver filigree-work, delicately chased. This was six inches long, and was made in the form of a cuff, and hinged; when fitted on the arm, a long silver pin running through grooves confined it in its place. This bracelet is called the "Bitoa," and is an ancient order conferred for valour in the field, but in more recent times is accorded as a distinctive mark of royal favour. Ras Alulu was deputed by the king to fasten this on my wrist. The guard of twenty men, under the charge of Bashaw Mari, were to accompany me as far as

Frangar to Ras Areya, who would see me safely across the frontier. Food was to be furnished along the route, and Bai-*jer-nont* Ingeddah had orders to remain with me as long as I pleased.

Now my two linguists had formed the most exaggerated expectations of presents to be made to them in return for the subserviency they had displayed, and this fever had been fanned by the two Abyssinian stewards, who had brought them daily glowing accounts of gifts in preparation for them, amongst which figured massive ornaments in gold, &c., and, with a refined ingenuity of torture, had measured their wrists and told them that our lengthened detention was due to the extensive nature of the presents which had to be sent for from Gondar. Their anticipations had consequently reached a very high standard, and when, after our dismissal, nothing appeared, Gooroo Pooroo and Ingeddah undeceiving them with much politeness and ill-concealed pleasure at their disappointment, their disgust was great. Ahmed, primed with wine, and burning with indignation, loudly expressed his opinion of the land, the king, and people in presence of the guard and the surrounding natives; and it was not until I placed before him

forcibly the fact that he endangered his safety by such conduct that I could reduce him to silence ; but from this period the dissension in my small band was incessant, and war to the knife existed between the linguists and Abyssinian stewards, causing me a long succession of disagreeables.

Fifty loaves of specially prepared white bread were sent me by the king to last me until Frangar was reached—a delicate attention which I fully appreciated, for I could not eat the ordinary soft bread with any satisfaction.

Our route from Debra Tabor was pursued in the same direction and with the same attendant natural features as the journey towards it had been, but considerable deviation along the mountains was made under the guidance of Bashaw Mari, which I at first attributed to stupidity, but subsequently found was intentional, that intelligent officer keeping us going in a circular path, in order to allow Ingeddah, who had lagged behind, time to overtake us. About five miles from Debra Tabor, we were greeted by a courier from Johannes, conveying his last good wishes and notice of the places on the route in which food had been provided.

A tremendous thunderstorm came on in admirable time to drench us through previous to reaching Amoorá Gedal, at which spot on this occasion we occupied a small village on a height overlooking our former place of residence and the spot encamped on by Ras Areya; it was situated on the left hand side of the valley leading to the plains of Foggora, a small branch of the Reb running at its base.

The village of about twelve houses was built on the crest of the hill in a circle, the centre of which was occupied by a large pen constructed of heavy branches of trees. Into this at night all the animals belonging to the inhabitants were driven, both for the purpose of preventing their wandering, which in this mountainous district would be a serious inconvenience, and also for their protection against the indefatigable hyæna.

On quitting Amoorá Gedal I mounted a horse, the gift of the king, the road between this point and Frangar being comparatively level and easy. Abyssinian horses are, however, unsatisfactory, coarse in breed and wanting in vivacity. Mine had been the property of Ras Alulu, and more accustomed to the *manége* and warlike exercises than the road, he objected to trotting, and in-

clined on all occasions to a short, stilty canter. On the whole, I preferred the unostentatious mule.

Returning by the same valley by which we had arrived, our present road was somewhat more to the south, but parallel to the former one; two ranges of hills running from east to west bounded our course on the north and south, Bashaw Mari insisting with much vigour that it was necessary to keep in view the villages, which are usually arranged some little height above the plains, bearing in contemplation the possible wants of the escort; and that individual I discovered would have willingly prolonged our companionship indefinitely, seeing that, in the first place, provisions, as long as he remained with me, were assured, and that, in the second place, as I had discovered, leave of absence from the king's neighbourhood was eagerly coveted, the asceticism prevailing under the monarch's eye being by no means suited to the general loose national character.

Bashaw Mari was without doubt the most stupid native I had yet encountered, the Abyssinian being ordinarily sly and astute. His countenance was a fair index to his character,

and although utterly devoid of ability, he was immensely vain and self-opinionated. Almost immediately after Debra Tabor had been quitted, it was clear that he afforded a butt for the witticisms of the escort, which his intense conceit prevented being in any manner apparent to himself; he was heavy and sleepy, and his mule, a beast of superior intelligence, so obviously despised him, that on all occasions when it seemed possible that Bashaw Mari might be napping, the animal would stop suddenly short, and back and kick with an evident eye to his displacement.

He was clad in a coarse cotton tunic, with a cartridge-belt confining it at the waist, had a large supply of amulets in addition to his baptismal cord around his throat, and was the possessor of a double-barrelled gun, aged with a sporting experience unshared by its owner. This weapon was, however, usually borne by a more humble pedestrian warrior, an especial favourite of mine, whom, whilst evincing the greatest external deference to his Captain, I had previously detected placing prickly beans beneath his mule's tail, a proceeding which partially accounted to me for that animal's occasional spasmodic fits of

gaiety. In fact, a ludicrous assumption of dignity on the Bashaw's part was combined with a complete want of power to enforce discipline amongst the men; and when, rather later in the day, they plundered some wayfarers of the gourds used by them for drinking purposes, the only appeal made by that undaunted warrior was one to Providence, which he effected by raising both arms to heaven and turning up his eyes in the same direction. As a coercive military measure it was ineffective, and when the disgusted mule kicked his contempt, the Bashaw retired under cover of that interruption, leaving the rights of *meum* and *tuum* to be adjusted at a future period and elsewhere.

Abyssinian soldiery are of lawless conduct, and the custom of the country makes might right; therefore villages are constructed in the manner I have mentioned (slightly raised above the plains), with a view to escaping forced contributions as far as is possible; the passage of armies, which naturally in their line of march take the level route, being a constant source of dread, whilst camp-followers and stragglers, either thieves by profession, or those whom circumstances may at any time convert into

thieves, find it more difficult to approach dwellings raised on the spurs of hills and surrounded by thick hedges, than houses erected on the general causeway.

In a garden-like space perfumed with jasmine, wild-roses, and honeysuckle, at the head of the bridge spanning the river Reb, I halted to allow the baggage mules and cattle to arrive. At this point, creeping along the hills from north-east and west, two small streams unite, joining their forces to course towards and swell the waters of Lake Tzana.

Two hours later we climbed the sides of the hills and dismounted in Faag. I inspected many of the dwellings, but found them all equally distasteful; eventually I occupied a detestably dirty one, one of a group of six enclosed within a high fence; but it recommenced raining so pitilessly that I was thankful even for the shelter afforded by it; and on this subject the lady of the house and the residential mule shared my feelings. Squatting in a corner, the former exhibited an unobtrusive but never-ceasing interest in all my movements. As I had long since learnt that no gentle hint, such as a gradual removal of my clothing, would produce the least

effect, I abandoned all such futile experiments, and resigned myself to a supervision the less flattering because persevered in with an ulterior view to petty larceny; and whilst smiles played about the deceitful creature's face, well did I know the quiet longing for acquisition in her soul. The mule was placed in a position to make him a pleased spectator of my slumbers; for his stall was immediately behind my bed, and his head and neck protruded above my face. The roof shortly began to leak, and a more dismal evening I have rarely passed. It rained in sheets, and even a momentary insertion of the person in the open air meant thorough saturation.

I made acquaintance this evening with the finest sort of needle manufactured in the district. It was two and a half inches long, and carried small string easily.

A tremendous row in the morning ensued between Mahomed (incited by Ahmed) and Ingeddah, the latter being accused to me of absorbing the king's bounty. It was true that only one ox a day was forthcoming since my departure from Debra Tabor, and a corresponding diminution of bread, etc., had resulted; but

as more than sufficed for the wants of my entire household was forthcoming, it was too delicate a matter for me to touch on. It, however, formed an admirable subject for recrimination between the foes, and I have no doubt the quiet, cat-like Ingeddah was guilty to the last degree.

Riding along the side of the hills under a steady downfall, the level lands of Foggora below looked uninteresting and dismal, and it was not until we turned to the right, and reached the beautiful defile and descent leading to Lamgué that I could feel any pleasure in the scene; but the view of the luxuriant foliage, the waving palms, and blooming cacti lining the warm, sheltered hollows; the murmuring, miniature streams, the endless distant hills, and the solemn stillness of the lake, hung with a heavy pall of mist obscuring its farther shores, created a picture too perfect to be passed without arousing one's sense of the loveliness of Nature. It was beauty under a temporary frown, but it was beauty still; and, supposing equal conditions of weather, the road from Debra Tabor would surpass in charm of scenery the road towards it.

The industry of this district was evidenced by caravans of cotton—we passed at least two hun-

dred bales—which lined the road to Faag ; giving employment to the quaint custom-house of the frontier of Begumder, the occupants of which honoured me with a smile of friendship on passing through as a recognized acquaintance.

We traversed the narrow path, and an hour later I halted on the shores of the lake, and for the first time used one of the small country tents which I had purchased at Debra Tabor ; this was just large enough to hold my bed lengthwise on one side of the poles, whilst opposite me were ranged my portmanteau, serving as a table, and the things I most valued. Entrance into my abode was necessarily made in a stooping position, or most easily on all fours, and it must be confessed that, when extended on my bed, my feet protruded outside my dwelling.

The spot on which we were encamped formed apparently a portion of the bed of the lake, which was enclosed in our rear by a low bank covered with shrubs and bushes, constituting doubtless its boundary at fuller periods ; copses of small trees ran behind this bank, and stretched inland to the encircling mountains. Ten yards in our front the waters lay without a ripple, so shallow at the edges that no drinking-

vessel, however flat, could be filled without wading some distance, and a straight walk out of half a mile would not in many instances have covered the knee. The huge, burly forms of the numerous hippopotami which frequent the deeper and more solitary portions were, however, easily distinguishable at some distance.

Birds of various sorts promenaded the margin of the lake, and family-looking pelicans and supercilious cranes stalked solemnly about its shores, congregating opposite my tent with speculations possibly upon its foreign proprietor and his uses.

On halting, the horses and mules were fastened to pegs driven into the ground, and some wood collected in the vicinity soon sparkled into fires, which served the purpose not only of preparing food, but of diffusing cheerfulness around our camp; small squares of carpet were produced and spread out by the followers, suppers prepared, and affairs discussed.

Shortly after our arrival a few wayfarers trudged along the banks to their neighbouring homes; but these soon ceased to pass, and, as the members of my party one by one dropped back upon their resting-places, sleep

took possession of the group. A consideration of my tent forced a new subject for reflection upon my mind, and, previous to seeking the hospitable shelter of my new Dembean residence, I thoughtfully weighed the comparative advantages of exposing my pedal extremities with or without boots—comfort on the one hand, possible peril on the other; for it was clear that the lanky birds, even now regarding my tent with hostile glances, considered me a superfluity. I felt uncertain how far they might resent the intrusion of my feet upon their privacy as an insult, and my ornithological knowledge was insufficient to insure me peace of mind against their spitefulness.

There is always a feeling of gloom even during the day attendant on large motionless sheets of water under a cold, leaden sky, and the white wings of the birds which flit across the surface of the lake look weird and ghost-like. As evening closed in, and dusk obscured the lake, I felt the stillness which prevailed, and could almost imagine it a shape substantial and tangible from which my tent became a cheerful refuge.

Before retiring, I cast a final glance around; a dim, yellow moon now struggled ineffectually

with heavy masses of cloud, and showed at intervals with a feeble, uncertain light; sky, mist, and water mingled together in one indistinct, vapour-like sheet; behind the banks looked black and blurred, whilst a thickened shadow on our left alone served to indicate where the mountains of Begumder ran into the lake; the restless birds had retired to roost, expiring fires flickered slowly out, no life disturbed the deserted shores, and the solemn silence of night had settled down upon a scene which looked grey and dreary.

When the morning broke, I struck my tent and resumed the route to Frangar, using the shores of the lake for a certain distance as a highway. It is a subject of regret with me that I cannot relate a successful adventure undertaken in pursuit of one of the amphibious monsters frequenting these regions, but my lengthened delay at Serramba, so utterly unexpected, made it necessary that I should now return to the Soudan as quickly as possible, and no happy results could be anticipated in the chase of the hippopotamus, unless I made up my mind to devote at least a week to that object.

After a short period we struck off into the

copse-covered tract which ran along our right hand, then journeyed over the ground made memorable by the struggle with the Betwiddet, and, three hours subsequently, crossed the Mogetsch. I must here notice that the rivers marked in charts, and mentioned by Bruce as lying between the Mogetsch and Emfras, were not crossed by me, which must have happened had they existed. As, however, he doubtless performed this journey in the autumn, mountain torrents swollen by the rains most probably ran across the plains into the lake at that time of year. The Mogetsch itself, though permanently flowing, is insignificant in the immediate neighbourhood of the lake, dispersing its stream in numerous small side-channels which course about the plains.

The villages of Goramba were passed on the right, and much diversion was caused as we went along by the sporting proclivities developed by Bashaw Mari. Innumerable times did that Christian warrior, with praiseworthy perseverance, approach wild fowl sufficiently near to blow their heads off. Equally numberless were the occasions seized by them to wing a retreating flight with contemptuous indifference, and

it seemed curious that even an Abyssinian should be so unskilful; but, watching the bearer of the gun, who loaded for him, I soon saw that he was providing the Bashaw with ball-cartridge, a proceeding which partially accounted for his non-success.

Shortly after we forded the second small stream below Frangar, and speedily commenced the ascent leading to the hill behind the projecting spur on which Ras Areya's house was situated. I found the crowd of retainers and courtiers assembled around the king's minister almost as great as that surrounding the monarch himself, and tents and temporary dwellings of every size and description covered each foot of ground in the vicinity of his residence; whilst hundreds of human beings of all conditions moved or lounged about. The hill, which on my previous visit had presented a quiet, leafy retreat, with a few widely-scattered peasants' houses, was now thronged with bustling groups of people, and resounded with life and animation.

There was here obviously more noise and less restraint practised than at Debra Tabor, and the sounds of musical instruments and revelry gave

assurance that greater licence was allowed—a freedom, I imagine, less due to any distinction of degree existing between the king and minister than to the known indifference of the latter to the observance of strictness of life, and indulgence to moral shortcomings.

I found that a good-sized tent, with a couch and carpets, had been provided for me; but I had hardly dismounted when a messenger was in attendance to say that the Ras would like to see me at once on arrival.

CHAPTER XV.

The Ras's House—Old Friends—Position—Ras's Speech—
 The Royal Animals partake of the Ras's Hospitality—
 Presents—Visit from Bizat Bey—Other Visitors—The
 Ras's Son—Domestic Troubles again—Final Interview
 with Ras Areya—Presents—His Ailments—Quit Fran-
 gar—Daioffa Alulu's Domain—The Escort.

MY tent was pitched on the side of the hill overlooking the plains and lake of Dembea. About three hundred yards lower down in my front was the mansion of the Governor of Amhara. A long, uncemented wall of blocks of stone ran along a tongue of land which formed the lower part of the hill, descending to the flat tracts below. This wall enclosed a large entrance-courtyard, in which was a circular stone house; beyond, in a second space, the larger dwelling occupied personally by the Ras, also of stone, stood. Both constructions were of considerable size, but uncemented.

On entering, I found him sitting on the ground, a mixed group of twenty friends or officials similarly posed around him. A fire, as usual, occupied the centre of the room, which was vast, dark, and lofty. My friend, the Betwiddet, was on his left hand, rather in the background. Sulky-looking as ever loomed the dark visage of Barambaras. The Ras's son filled a place near his father, who was supported on the right by a venerable man, the Governor of Karoota ; the remainder of the guests I was unacquainted with.

Greetings of a friendly description were offered me by my host, and but little formality was observed. The Betwiddet commenced a series of smiling nods, and Serramba's chief assumed an aspect as nearly pleasant as his untiring devotion to his country would permit. A chair was offered me, but I considered it in better taste to waive that luxury, as all were sitting, and, taking a place on the ground opposite Areya and amongst his guests, reduced myself to their level in a crouching attitude.

Now there is etiquette even to be observed in this arrangement of the person, and the man who should place his legs in front at length

would be regarded as a monster in Abyssinian society. It is excellent form to pass the arms in front of the legs, which may be doubled up ; but the cross-legged position is again to be avoided as Mahomedan. Seated, therefore, in the most graceful manner, after preliminary compliments, I awaited the Ras's views ; they came as follows :

“ I have long wished to talk to you, but now, owing to difference of language, we are but as the beasts of the field ; we may gaze at, but cannot understand each other. Had you learnt Abyssinian, it might have been otherwise ; but now we must talk with the tongues of others. I would have spoken of the wrongs the Mussulmans have wrought us, but I find you, a Christian, on the side of those who injure us. My life has been one of adventure and misery. Nine years I passed a prisoner in Shoa ; I saw the hands and feet of my friends and relatives lopped off, their eyes put out, their bodies mangled ; four years in prison at Serramba, which you know, two years near Magdala, when I was released by the English, for which they must be ever my friends. Had Theodorus lived, I must have died in chains. I should be rightly

the king of the country, but my son reigns in my stead, and I am old and satisfied, but I direct the affairs of the nation. You have seen the king, and you return in good health, for which God be praised. When you first came, we were away fighting, and had no interpreters to make known the contents of the letter, or you should not have been so long kept in suspense. At one time I thought Ismael Pasha my friend; we have always wished to be at peace with all. At present we return from a successful campaign, in which we have obliged the payment of customary but withheld tribute. You will return; Egypt will be informed of the king's wishes; let us hope that peace will ever exist between us. Which part of Habesh that you have seen do you prefer? This part was formerly the residence of the Kings of Abyssinia, but wretched struggles have wasted the plains with blood, and residences fit for kings exist no longer. We live as you see; the good houses have been destroyed, but I hope, whilst you remain, you will not be unhappy."

It may be supposed, from the above extract, that I arrived when the Ras was in a conversational mood, but Abyssinians are fond of talking,

or rather sermonizing, and I was a fair object. This speech in its integrity lasted more than an hour. The period which he deplored of past superior habitations and prosperity, I could not help thinking somewhat over-stated, and, like the "good old times" often lamented in our own land. I had met with no signs or remains of better buildings, and, had more massive constructions been at any time prevalent, some ruins must have surely remained to bear witness to their former existence.

Before I was permitted to take leave there was of course wine to be consumed, and I was asked to send the horse and mule presented me by the king to the Ras's house, there to occupy a corner in his own apartment, it being considered that any animal the gift of royalty was far too sacred to be allowed to remain in the open air at night.

I felt how very guilty I had been on the previous evening, and now possessed a fuller comprehension of Bashaw Mari's reason for desiring a village for each night's halt, but nobody had told me of this national observance, and I am sure that the six-foot tent I had slept in would not have accommodated a horse and mule

besides myself; but I knew immediately after I heard the present destination proposed for the animals, that native feelings had been shocked by the careless pegging down of the royal steed on the damp shores of the lake, and that noble beast's houseless wanderings had doubtless disturbed the loyal Ingeddah's rest, and lain heavily on the distressed soul of Bashaw Mari.

Presents of oxen and sheep, and the usual variety (rather circumscribed) of Abyssinian dainties, awaited me on my return from the Ras, and were received with fitting honours. I must confess, however, that I did not like my quarters, for the hill was terribly crowded, and my tent was hemmed in and surrounded by many others, so unpleasantly near to mine as to force me to be a sharer of their noisy revels or wranglings; curious crowds remained standing about the outside watching my every motion, whilst women and children took up sitting positions with a view to lengthened endurance in their laudable supervision, or, slyly lingering in the rear, lifted the folds and peeped into the interior.

As the evening advanced hilarious shrieks from many minstrels filled the air, and dancing proceeded vigorously. Amongst other exponents

of the Terpsichorean art I had the pleasure of once more seeing the somewhat elderly sylph who had given me a taste of her quality during Lent, and who appeared to be a denizen of this neighbourhood. The mules also had been tethered close to my canvas abode, and kicked and quarrelled the whole night; whilst, to crown all, torrents of rain, which speedily fell, informed me in the most convincing manner that my tent was an old one, and leaked at every pore.

In the early morning I received a visit from the Betwiddet, Bizat Bey. This genial gentleman seemed very quiet, and devoid of his ordinary vivacity, confined himself to generalities, congratulating me upon having reached Johannes, and, after remaining some time, took his leave.

I had, before I last parted with the Betwiddet, discovered that he was a finished actor, and, though a plausible, I regretted to find a very insincere companion; and, on instituting a mental comparison between the Governors of Chelga and Dembea, I found a difficulty in deciding which was the least honest, but there was decidedly greater pleasure in being deceived by Bizat Bey than in being lectured by Barambaras, and whereas great claim to virtue was asserted

by the latter, moral laxity had been propounded by the former as generally pleasant, if wrong. It was easy from his manner to perceive that he had an object in his visit which had as yet remained untold.

I was next favoured by a call from a stranger, and I was at first at a loss to understand the reason of the polite attention. He produced, after an introductory preamble, a copy in Amharic of the five Books of Moses, of which he begged my acceptance. I declined with thanks, fully enlightened as to this indirect manner of extracting a pecuniary present, and producing in my turn a small edition of the entire Bible, informed him that I was already provided with scriptural authorities. I bade him adieu, and found myself then attacked by a professional beggar, who appeared in the shape of a priest, armed with a large emblazoned manuscript edition of portions of the Old Testament. I satisfied him that I was a Christian by a donation, and he departed. The youngest son of Ras Aroya next entered, ostensibly to show me a rifle belonging to himself, really, I was aware, to draw me on to exhibit my rifles and fowling-

piece, with a vague hope of a possible reversion of the same.

After he had bid me farewell, my tent was besieged by the halt, the maimed, and the blind, and no ailment was considered too inveterate for my possible skill. I undeceived them as to my power to remove chronic maladies by such simple remedies as I possessed, and set out to pay a second visit to the Ras Areya. I found him in the same room, which was now untenanted save by himself. Our conversation was of short duration, and he seemed unwell; suffering, as he imparted to me, from heart disease.

Returning to my temporary abode, I found Bizat Bey seated on the ground. Placing him in a more dignified position on my couch, I waited for him to unfold the cause of this second visit; and he then, with a sad and penitential air, poured forth his contrition for having in any manner in the past impeded my advance towards the king, adding his hope that I would understand that, whatever he had done against my wishes, he had done unwillingly. I said that there was no cause for a recurrence to disagreeable recollections. Had he not furnished me

with six men, without whom I could never have succeeded? I made light of the subject, and we parted excellent friends. It grieves me to think that the governor had yet an ulterior design, and had not quite abandoned the idea that the interest he displayed in me might awaken generosity afresh, and cause me to remember that he was "a poor old man," as he plaintively repeated on parting.

It rained incessantly, and I felt heartily ashamed at the despicable conduct of my own followers in the face of the Abyssinians. The interpreters had a violent quarrel, and when I subsequently wanted Fadl el Moula he was in a state of happy insensibility. Then Mahomed and Ahmed waged a war of words, and Ahmed, who had trusted much in his dignity, was no match for Mahomed, who had none; the language of the latter being, as Ahmed informed me, terrible, even in Arabic, and I could believe it. The rain happily drove them to their tents; but I was not surprised when later on Machmood entered to tell me that there was no dinner, and that Mahomed had left in order to take service with Barambaras, despairing of justice at my hands on Ahmed, the dragoman. The idea

of Mahomed, a Mussulman, cooking for the fanatical border-chief was so comical that I felt but little disturbed ; and accordingly at dusk he made a penitential return.

My preparations were made for quitting Frangar on the next morning, and at 7 a.m. I went to take leave of Ras Areya, whom I found in the midst of some thirty retainers. As a parting gift, I presented him with a Winchester rifle, which he refused at that time, remarking that a traveller should not separate himself from his arms ; but added that if, on reaching the frontier, I was still in the same mind I could forward it to him by Gooroo Pooroo, who was to accompany me as far as Metemach. On his side, a horse, saddle, and accoutrements was led forward, in addition to a tusk of ivory.

I was then consulted as to the state of his heart. Well acquainted, as he informed me, with the European's invariable knowledge of medicine, he was certain that I could administer something which would be of benefit. I was compelled to feel that organ, which I did without deriving much professional knowledge from the act, and I confess I was puzzled to resolve which to prescribe from the few medicines I was

in possession of as likely to be the least mischievous; but I was well aware that to decline all treatment would produce dissatisfaction, and my refusal would be attributed less to a deficiency of skill than to want of will. Quinine, chlorodyne, and Livingstone's and of course Cockles' pills completed my resources, and I came to the conclusion that possibly chlorodyne, which I had observed on exterior labels volunteered happy results for all disorders, would be the best to experiment with; accordingly I sent for a small bottle of this panacea, and gave it, explaining the doses; from which I foresaw harmless, if not beneficial effects. I was, however, doomed once more to the discovery that residence in a strange land entails strange experiences, and a polite invitation to take a trial dose of my own physic somewhat disgusted me; and "although," the Ras's son said, "no suspicion of evil design could possibly attach to me, it would be esteemed a favour if I would swallow a similar quantity to that which I had recommended to his father."

Feeling that the hand of Providence was distinctly visible in the happy thought which had inspired chlorodyne, and not pills, gratitude

caused me to conceal the nauseous narcotic as rapidly as possible without repining, and thirty drops in water of this unappetising morning drink disappeared down my throat. The experiment was deemed satisfactory; and if I exhibited in my person no very striking improvement from the drug, still, on the other hand, I remained alive, and apparently uninjured. So the bottle was corked up and removed with thanks. Had I refused the *experimentum in corpore vili*, it would have given rise to disagreeable suspicions of more importance than the temporary discomfort occasioned me by the bitter beverage; but I retired as quickly after this incident as I could, fearing the development of farther disorders, with a consequent preliminary trial of remedies.

Many had been the temptations offered me during my residence in the country to act in a professional capacity. I had successfully resisted them all; I am naturally unambitious, and never experienced any temptation to emulate the miraculous achievements obtained by small means by many travellers, combined with the almost religious veneration paid to them in consequence. I had admitted my inability to

restore lost sight, had repudiated the notion of imparting renewed vitality to a withered limb, and in endless cases of chronic disease, extending over periods of eight or ten years, had checked the unbounded native faith in anything foreign as a cure, by owning that I was helpless to aid them. At all places where I had remained a day the maimed, the halt, and the blind had been produced for my inspection. I had pitied their afflictions, but had endeavoured to make them understand that a special knowledge was required, of which I was not possessed. My humility had but succeeded in giving me, as a credulous and unreasoning patient, the directing genius of the country, willing to swallow anything, however nasty, if only I would absorb into my own system a little of the drug proposed. How many lives would be saved, I thought, if only a similar system prevailed at home; but my ever-recurring feeling on that day was gratitude that I had not prescribed pills.

The mules were ready when I returned to my tent, and a fresh guard, supplied by Ras Areya, replaced the one which had escorted me from Debra Tabor. Bizat Bey's six men, with

whose conduct I had reason to be extremely well pleased, I dismissed with a handsome present, and the escort were treated to a similar formality; for no ceremony is completed in Abyssinia without a gift. The duties of Bai-jernont Ingeddah also terminated at this point with a satisfactory farewell, although I was well aware that that self-contained individual had in many ways benefited by his unjust stewardship.

Three loaves of fine white bread reached me from Ras Areya on departure.

At Frangar I was but a few hours from Gondar, and I had serious thoughts of prolonging my experiences by a visit to that city; but one Amharic town is so like another that one description will hold good for all; and, beyond the ruins of the palace built by the Portuguese, the capital holds nothing of interest—it has, in fact, ceased to be the capital, the present king preferring residence either at Adua in the north, or at Debra Tabor in Begumder, and when circumstances require his presence at Gondar he now occupies a house at Empèschera, a short distance from that town among the mountains.

Native manufactures are undoubtedly to be met with there of superior excellence, but these are few indeed, and are confined to sword-blades, cutlery, cotton-wares, and pottery.

The most interesting features in the country are presented by Nature, which is lavish of beautiful scenery. Art of any kind is so uncultivated as to be virtually a neglected quality. Every town is a mere assemblage of circular, thatched houses, with conical, thatched roofs, placed about in no order, and primitive in their surroundings of fences and trees. An occasional stone house, still circular, composed of large, unhewn, and uncemented blocks, impresses one with the idea of only being darker and more impervious to air than the others. As Abyssinian intellect has not yet risen to the lofty eminence in which the construction of a chimney assumes form and consistency even as a luxury—for the king himself consumes his own smoke most strictly—it is unnecessary to search for architectural merit in towns and cities, and a prolonged residence amongst these thatched erections forces on one the conviction that they are conspicuous neither for external beauty nor internal comfort.

Of such buildings the most favourable ideas would be entertained by an acquaintance with the churches which stopped at the church-door; for the interiors are almost invariably uncared-for, and hung with spiders' webs of rope-like thickness.

It must be proclaimed, also, that the habits of the people are in accordance with the dwellings they reside in, and I confess that their condition disappointed me, and that I had expected to encounter a far higher status of domestic well-being, or, at all events, evidence of a far higher past one than I met with. It is not, I believe, that the country has retrograded, but that it has failed to progress; and the absence of communication with distant and more civilized nations, whilst the whole interests of the kingdom have been sacrificed to internal factions and contests with neighbouring races, from whom no light was to be acquired, has resulted in a stagnation of thought and enterprise in all channels save those common to isolated and barbarous nations, fanaticism and warfare.

The early civilization existing in the first centuries of the Christian era was confined to the coast, and extended no farther south than

Axumitæ. The later direct contact of Abyssinia with Europe, arising from the importation and predominance of Jesuit influence, was of too short and turbulent a nature to leave any beneficial results on art culture, and the few buildings and improvements introduced during their ascendancy have been allowed to decay, whilst the whole attention and energy of the country has been employed in unceasing internal struggles, created by the ambitions of rival candidates for power. Gondar, which was in the fourteenth century raised to the dignity of the court residence, has of late years decreased in influence and population, but, from the presence of superior artizans, still remains the principal southern mart for cutlery and cotton manufactures.

I bade adieu to Frangar, taking a north-westerly direction, and, leaving the church and village in the rear, shortly passed the temporary encampment of my old guardian, Barambaras, to whom I thought it unnecessary to pay a final visit.

On this homeward journey to Chelga, a much shorter and more direct path was taken than any previously pursued, it being, I suppose, considered no longer necessary to assume any

disguise with me as to routes. I was now returning an individual beyond suspicion, honoured by the monarch and the all-powerful Ras. On former occasions doubt had existed not only as to my favourable reception, but even as to whether I should be received at all. We consequently occupied seven hours only, and reached Daiossa Alulu's residence at six p.m. The big stone house, formerly devoted to Barambaras, was pressed upon me, but it presented so gloomy and unventilated an appearance that I declined it, much to the surprise of everyone, as it was considered—and, indeed, as things were constituted in the land, undoubtedly was—a palatial residence; but I was careful that the royal stud should be housed in a fitting manner, and a space in it was accordingly devoted to them.

I passed the night in my small black tent, which was, at all events, clean and airy, and on the following morning had a large one erected in the middle of the space composing the chief of the market's domain, for I found that delays were again inevitable, and, being now in the hands of a retainer of Barambaras, I did not expect that any superfluous energy would be exercised on my

behalf. Daiossa Alulu was well-intentioned personally, but he acted under superior direction. Two days before leaving the Ras, I had asked specially for a speedy return to the Soudan, and the minister had demanded of Barambaras in how many days his escort would be ready. The answer was in two days; of course I was now informed that several days must elapse before their arrival could be hoped for.

If, however, my wishes in this respect were but indifferently fulfilled, I found that I was treated with a consideration which I had not commanded before, and it was evident that the position of the man who had been entertained by the king was an assured one, even in the territories of the "key of the frontier."

The old gentleman in whose house I had slept on a former occasion, and whom I found still investigating the merits of his various swords, brightened up at my appearance on his threshold, connecting me at once with reminiscences of hot coffee, and his daughter smiled with raised hopes of future sugar; but trouble speedily commenced again in an order which Daiossa stated he had received from Barambaras to dismiss Ras Areya's guard. I knew at once

the true meaning of this desire, for I had been distinctly told that the escort was to remain with me until my departure, which I felt would be facilitated if I retained them, whereas, if I dismissed them to return to Frangar, it would be tantamount to a declaration that Barambaras had already provided his escort, and that I had quitted Chelga ; thus it was possible I might be detained by him indefinitely.

The maintenance of the men was the real difficulty ; every responsibility is in Abyssinia pushed on from one to the other, until reaching the last and lowest unfortunate, who pays for all. Daiossa Alulu was in this latter position, and his private interest demanded the retirement of the escort, who would have to be entertained at his expense. The Ras had magnificently, as Governor of Amhara, furnished me with a guard ; the Governor of Chelga, through whose country they would pass, magnificently ordered their entertainment ; on Daiossa Alulu, in whose tenements they would dwell, must devolve the duty of providing them with food.

I had now been long enough in the country to understand all this, so I at once also, in a magnificent way, made over to the guard the ox

which the Ras had informed me was to be brought daily for my immediate household, but of which as yet no mention had been made. This was a terrific and unforeseen counter-demonstration, and Daiossa Alulu's countenance fell. I proceeded further to give orders that this mythical animal should be at once slaughtered in the native fashion for my Abyssinian followers, which of course left the unfortunate Daiossa without a supporter, as all smelt a feast. A smile went round, and, in order to escape this fresh embarrassment, Daiossa retired hastily, and nothing more was at present said about the men. I did not desire them to return to Frangar until I found myself on the road to Wahnaat, and I had good reason to feel no dependence on either the energy or good will of Barambaras.

As, however, I did not really wish to embarrass Daiossa with expenditure on my account (having oxen and sheep of my own remaining from the king's munificence), I ordered two bullocks to be killed, one for the Christians and one for the Mussulmans; then calling Daiossa into my tent, I made him a present which would hold him harmless from loss—any amount of bread, milk, &c., being amply covered. After

this harmony reigned. The "berberer" made at Chelga claims a word of recognition; it was the only fiery condiment I tasted which was really pleasing to the palate, and was composed of tamarinds, black pepper, and capsicums.

CHAPTER XVI

Present to Ahmed—Change Master—Hillstorm—Robbery—
 —Dulcena's Wiles—Route to Wahnat—The Ras's
 Enmity—An Unpleasant Incident—Proceed alone—
 Arrival at Wahnat.

AT this time Ahmed the dragoman's feelings were somewhat relieved by the present of a horse and saddle; the fittings and silver ornaments, however, which adorned both the equipments given me were, in his case, deemed unbecoming, and I am bound to confess that the quadruped was neither of a showy nor workman-like description: it was brought over from Frangar by Gooroo Pooroo as a gift from Ras Arya, and a certain accession of dignity was obtained by the dragoman in consequence, who, mounted on the steed with haughty carriage, thenceforth disported himself in equestrian exercise on the plains beneath.

The market of Chelga took place during my stay, and the village and open space surrounding it was attended by at least three thousand people, drawn from the neighbouring districts; it extended over three days, and, as a few Mussulmans are permitted to dwell on this side of the country, the concourse assembled presented a mixed gathering of Arabs and natives. Business was conducted in oxen, horses, coffee, cotton, wax, butter, and honey, but in most instances the time was devoted to bargaining, the delivery of the animals and goods taking place on the last or subsequent days. But few dollars are in circulation, most transactions being arranged by exchanges, the gallup or salt currency balancing the differences.

The position of Chelga constitutes it one of the largest trading marts in the country; distant but three days from Egyptian territory, and a few hours from the capital Gondar, a great portion of the commerce of central and southern Abyssinia passes through it, the whole being, however, very limited, judged by European standards, and the imported manufactured goods are articles of the cheapest and most inferior classification.

The large caravans from the south of Abyssinia, bringing slaves, ivory, gold, ostrich feathers, coffee, &c., from Gojam and the Gallas, make their way through the entire kingdom direct to the coast, their mart being Massowah, where they receive in exchange, in addition to Maria Theresa dollars, much rubbish in the shape of beads, cut glass, blue floss silk (used in the construction of the baptismal cords), Indian stuffs, and a few Turkish and European manufactured cloths, carpets, and rugs.

The whole trade of Abyssinia must be very small, and would seem likely to remain so, for at present there exists in the country no development of commercial instincts. The Habesh is a shrewd bargainer, his nature is avaricious, but the game of speculation is as yet unlearned, and hand to hand transactions are the only form of trade understood. Venture much to gain much is as a rule the result of long practice, inuring to bold commercial transaction; the Habesh may become a man of business in the future, but at present, with primitive ideas, he shrinks from risk, and his grasp of any matter not familiar to him is timid and impeded by suspicion; this latter quality invades his every action.

A large trade in slaves from the Gallas was formerly carried on by Abyssinia, a well-formed, handsome woman costing a hundred dollars. This is now a prohibited traffic on the side of the Government of the Soudan, and there the slave marts exist no longer. Many of the southern Galla races are of fairer complexions than the Abyssinians, and possess skins of an olive hue.

On the second day of the market gathering a terrific hailstorm fell, and, as there was no sort of shelter for the visitors, it was amusing to observe them exposed to its violence, without any means of protection beyond crouching on the ground, and covering their heads with their arms and wrappers. The storms of hail in this country are both fierce and frequent, the missiles of great size, and projected with such force as to be absolutely dangerous.

On the fifth day of my residence a most disagreeable incident occurred; the silver ornaments of the saddlery given me by Ras Areya were stolen during the night from the big stone house in which they were kept, the two interpreters and their two servants, who all inhabited that dwelling after I had declined it, having occupied it during the same night. The value of the

ornaments might have been thirty dollars, but the nature of the theft made it almost doubtful whether the mere intrinsic value of the trappings was the object sought.

Accusations and counter-accusations, hints and suspicions, were poured into my ears, and from Daiossa Alulu to the poorest native in the neighbourhood, all were by turns suggested to me as possible culprits. As the ornaments had been cut off one by one, and the leather trappings left behind, it was obviously a work deliberately done, in no very pressing fear of detection, and the interpreters were subjected to openly-made remarks of a very unpleasant nature by their many foes. Personally I accused nobody, for not the smallest substantial proof was forthcoming, and it seemed to me to be quite as probably the act of an unscrupulous man, in order to prejudice me against a follower, as to be a theft perpetrated for the value of the things stolen.

Gooroo Pooroo, however, at once rushed off to Frangar to the Ras with the news; in the course of the day he returned with a fresh and similar set of ornaments, with the Ras's regards; but I heard that, according to Abyssinian law, which exacts an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a

tooth, although no culprit had been detected, as the occurrence had taken place in the jurisdiction of Barambaras, the loss would have to be made good by him, and I am quite sure that the "key" must have anathematized my name and existence.

A daily incessant war was waged with reference to the guard provided by Ras Areya, and numerous complaints were made of their misconduct towards the residents in the small settlement by Daiossa Alulu, who used to present himself at the door of my tent, and having gained admittance, placed himself before me on his knees in a supplicatory attitude, his hands clasped together. He would remain thus for half an hour at a time, and assuming an air of the greatest misery, announce to me his present and future ruin as a result of that pernicious guard. At times, having observed my fondness for children, he would lead by the hand his small son, wife, and entire family, and passing one by one into the tent they would all fall on their knees together, reciting a wretched chorus of misery; the father explaining with sobs in his voice that my obduracy was reducing them all to sorrow. I need not say that this was acting,

and in begging the Habesh is absolutely indefatigable.

I had taken care that no pecuniary sacrifice should be suffered, in fact he was now a considerable gainer, but his views had enlarged with acquisition, and having received money for the maintenance of the guard, it was now as much as ever his object to get rid of them and save the food they might consume. Though sorely tried with his piteous invasions and reproachful looks I held out, and on the seventh day after my arrival at Chelga I was informed that Barambaras's representative was on the road from Serramba with the necessary men. This was welcome news; for that very morning in despair I had sent to Ras Areya, acquainting him with the delay which was detaining me from return.

When at length we really left Chelga I made a present to Mrs. Daiossa Alulu of a cow and small calf, and took an affectionate leave of the various youthful members of the hill, with whom I had been great friends.

I mustered on the homeward journey twenty-six mules only, having altogether lost four on the route. We descended the mount, crossed

the market-village, and steered a north-westerly course through the mountains for Wahnaat, which would lead us past but happily not to Serramba. Daiossa Alulu of course insisted on accompanying me, and mounted his war-steed for the purpose, the guard running as usual in front, rear, and alongside of us. Our party was increased by a camel, which Fadl el Moula, with an eye to business, had purchased at Chelga market for five dollars. The unfortunate animal had been in the country some time, having been brought across the frontier, but no one caring to risk the return journey with him burdened, he had passed a melancholy existence, looking sadly out of place, the only one of his species I had met in Abyssinia. He appeared emaciated and pinched with cold, but being allowed to pursue his way independently, got on fairly well; he was, however, terribly clumsy on the mountain-tracks, and I am sure must have been quite glad to find himself once more at home on the lovely sandy deserts of the Soudan.

After about three hours we entered the long valley enclosing Serramba on its southern side, and as I passed along its lofty heights I thought of the many weary hours I had paced away on

its slopes, but my old residence was hidden from my view, and shortly after a sudden curve removed Serramba and its picturesque heights and valleys alike from my sight.

In a very pretty spot, under a wide-spreading, shade-giving tree, to my great astonishment, after a march of four hours, Barambaras's representative elected to halt, the reason assigned being the insufficient number of the escort; but the real reason was shortly after disclosed by the re-appearance of Gooroo Pooroo, who had been absent at our departure, with a tall, broad-shouldered companion, wearing a long black beard, a most unusual appendage to an Abyssinian layman; in countenance, also, he in no manner resembled the native types, and I was puzzled to account both for his presence and his nationality. He was introduced by Gooroo Pooroo as an emissary from the Ras, specially sent to see me safely across the frontier. As, however, beyond a formal acknowledgment of my presence on first arrival, he took no farther notice of me, and in no manner kept me in view either on this or the following day, I was doubtful of the correctness of this designation; so many false representations had been by this time

made to me, that I had grown to place but little faith in any.

Ours was a very gipsy-like looking camp, and a number of huts of boughs were speedily raised for future shelter, as every promise was conveyed by the clouds that the night would be wet and stormy; and about dusk rain fell in torrents, from which I was safely protected by the folds of my small black tent.

On the following morning, at 5 a.m., we continued our course, the track being a wild and winding one around the side of high mountains, deep hollows running below on the outer hand. Innumerable streams and torrents foamed around, coursing off to swell the Atbara, and the path wore in such circles that for hours Serramba's towering heights remained visible in our rear.

It was my usual habit in these daily journeys to keep my baggage-mules in front, being thus less likely to lose them, or permit the drivers to loiter behind, and the men of Chelga were so careless that it was quite possible a lagging mule might be left with no attendant at all. Animals, if not mounted, will stray or stop to feed, and thus fall to the rear. Gooroo Pooroo, Baldo Mariam,

and Mahomed were on this occasion in advance with the mules, which carried my most valued things, books, letters, &c. The path was very narrow, and we were of course in single file, wooded heights rising on the right hand directly upward from our feet, whilst below on the left, at a great depth, ranged an undulating ravine.

We had been proceeding in this way for some time, when a sudden curve brought us to a hamlet of a few houses on a small flat spur connecting two mountains. In an instant all was confusion; with one accord the mules around me were quitted, the men rushing to the houses, on which they levied forced contributions of bread and drink. No authority, of course, was at hand, and Gooroo and Baldo Mariam, who were in front, appeared not to hear or be aware of the lawless conduct of the men surrounding me. The mules were left to stray wherever they liked, the guard refused to go any farther, threw themselves on the ground, and, in answer to my endeavours to urge them to advance, informed me that I should go back to Serramba, and were decidedly mutinous and insulting.

I had not met the representative of Baram-

baras or the emissary from the Ras since a polite contest between them at a narrow ford some distance back; my interpreters were not to be seen, and I was utterly without means of appeal or power to compel the wretches to continue their march. My led horses were fortunately in the hands of two men whom I had engaged at Frangar, who remained obedient, and with these in despair, after repeated useless efforts, I resolved to go forward, and endeavour to find the way across these interminable mountain ranges to Wahnaat; unhappily my compass was in the boxes in charge of Mahomed, and I pushed on, hoping, by additional speed, to overtake the three servants who were before me.

As I quitted the scene, the mule with my bed was wandering down into the valley, another with the tent was returning to the rear, the others appeared undecided as to their direction, whilst the men remained seated on the ground, obviously without intention of moving; there was but little use in my attempting farther endeavours to press them to their duty; besides, I was really more anxious about the effects in front, which I did not wish out of my sight, and of which at present I discovered no trace in the

distance; if also I halted now with these men, all chance of reaching Wahnaat that evening must be abandoned, and I should in all likelihood wander about in the dark, lose the road, and be forced to pass the night on the bare ground, little better off on the next morning. There was, unfortunately, a division of roads, one continuing inside along the mountain, which was wedge-shape at this point, whilst the other branched off outside it. I determined, after consultation with the two Dembeans, to take the latter, which coincided with my idea of the direction, and pursued it as rapidly as I could, hoping the men behind would come to their senses presently and follow to Wahnaat.

For some distance I trotted on, but no signs of servants or mules appeared, and I felt astonished, for I ought certainly to have overtaken them, considering the extra diligence I had exercised. I however perceived, at the base of the hills I was traversing, certain wayfarers and mules coming from an opposite direction. Descending, therefore, as rapidly as possible, I found myself on the road they were pursuing, which was a comparatively easy and level track.

The travellers proved to be a cotton caravan, but, to my disgust, they informed me that no persons answering the description I gave had passed that way. This was perplexing, but to return was impossible, so I pushed on, hearing at all events that I was on the road to Wahnaat.

After some hours, in a wildly picturesque hollow, dark and overshadowed by trees, I found myself confronted by a stream which proved to be the Gondauer, here about forty feet wide and easily fordable, the water not reaching to our mules' knees. It ran in a winding rocky bed with a rather rapid current. On its banks I discovered Ahmed, from whom I learnt that at the division of the roads he had gone on in advance, taking the same one as myself, supposing that the rest were following, but that after some distance he had become aware that he was quite alone, and had consequently halted at the stream.

Fadl el Moula and Gooroo Pooroo then appeared about half a mile off, Baldo Mariam bringing up the rear; but no baggage and no Mahomed. On arrival I asked the two latter when and where they had left Mahomed and

the laden mules committed to their charge, and received the answer that they were among the mountains, but would arrive shortly. Moving forward therefore, for threatening drops began to fall, I shortly again crossed a bend in the river, though here its bed was green and mossy, and looming in the distance the hills bounding Wahnaat became visible; but I felt highly dissatisfied with the whole day's performance, which I began to be aware had been previously arranged from its earliest commencement and concealed an ulterior object, though what that could be, unless it were a private examination of my papers, previous to leaving the country, by the Ras's emissary, I could not divine.

No great harm could result. I was quite clear of any traitorous designs against the Government, and the minister's agent could but examine the dispatches confided to me by the king. Possibly the border chief considered it necessary, in the interests of the country, to inspect my effects before leaving the kingdom, without subjecting me to the indignity of a search; if so, Mahomed possessed the keys and was not likely to present very

formidable opposition to a private scrutiny. Suspicion and duplicity are of the strongest home growth in the country, and I felt it impossible to penetrate the motives of the day's proceedings.

The rest of the journey was finished in heavy rain; two hours' soaking had to be endured before Wahnaat was reached, and two hours more passed before the Ras's representative, Barambaras's officer, Mahomed, and my effects, together with the escort, struggled into Wahnaat. As it was then too late to open any boxes or pitch tents, the last night of my stay in Abyssinia was a properly miserable one.

The vice-governor of Metemnah (Gallabat) had come to meet me with two hundred of Shêk Salih's warriors, amongst whom, though Mussulmans, I confess I felt more at home than with these wild uncouth Christians of Serramba; and it was somewhat amusing to consider that my last day's march had been effected without the escort sent for my supposed protection and guidance, whose society I had in fact found so unpleasant that I had felt heartily glad to be freed from it.

The accident which had forced me to depend

on my own resources had exposed the fact that we were being guided amongst mountains on unfrequented tracts, whilst a caravan route of a comparatively easy nature ran parallel to the arduous paths we pursued. As to the manner in which I had been dragged over precipices and mountain lakes on my first entrance into the kingdom, I had now long known that a desire to make the border-land appear to the foreigner as impenetrable as possible had been the object sought; and on my first visit to Dembea the apparently frank but really cunning Betwiddet had purposely in many instances selected unfrequented paths, with enclosing chains of heights on either side, in order that I might return as unenlightened as possible as to the high-roads and travelling facilities of the country I had passed through; and there had been, until the arrival of the king's permission for me to approach Debra Tabor, a deliberate intention in every possible manner to disguise the direct routes.

In the morning I paid a parting visit to the two officials, and became convinced that the representative of Ras Areya was a Syrian, and no Abyssinian. They left on their return journey to Ser-

ramba early in the day, and at the same period I quitted Wahnaat with my Arab friends, taking a westerly course in the direction of Gallabat.

We encamped that night on the banks of the Gondauer or Atbara, and arrived on the following day without incident in Gallabat.

THE END.

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